"LET'S MAKE A MOVIE!"

An Eye Opening Review on AUSTRALIAN FILM Production

"Rupe" KATHNER

FROM THE COLLECTION
OF MAYA BLART

WONG special!

LET'S MAKE A MOVIE

A Story of Picture
Production in
Australia

by

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DEDICATION

This little book is an outpouring of an enthusiastic technician whose one ambition is the establishment of a Sound Film Producing Industry in Australia. Throughout my career I have always been able to count on two staunch friends whose ambitions, I believe, are the same as mine. Therefore, for what it is worth, I dedicate this, my story, to My Partner, in all my hopes and ambitions ALMA BROOKS, and to MERVYN MURPHY, a coming power in Sound Recording in Australia.

—"RUPE" KATHNER.

CHAPTER 1

In the Beginning

"LET'S go to the Flicks!" I suppose this is one of the most popular phrases in the English language today. The "Flicks!"

I daresay there is no more universally accredited form of amusement in the whole world than the motion picture theatre—so, with this thought in mind, I plan to cover the sad story of picture-making in Australia. And what a sad story it really is! What a graveyard of smashed ambitions, dreams of fabulous fortunes. And all there is to show is elaborate share scripts, glowing typewritten contracts, depleted Bank accounts, hundreds of investors who now wouldn't touch pictures with a pitchfork; and the ultimate return for all this is shelves full of celluloid whereupon the local and imported stars have "emoted" their ambitious emotions, dreaming, always dreaming that here would be the happy beginning of a stardom that would make their names household words wherever films were shown, and that means in every city, town and hamlet and every hall wherein could be gathered enough people to pay for film hire. But alas! How futile can dreams be, especially when they include Australian Films.

"I remember when"—that's usually the password at the grand old Pioneers' Dinner they hold every year in one of the city's leading pubs. Here, annually, gather all, or nearly all those old, and not so old veterans of the films to talk about "I remember when." Mind you, not all of these hoary veterans make it; some just can't rake up the ten bob required to get them in. Nevertheless, there's usually a fairly good gathering—and it's actually worth the ten bob to hear these past Barnums and Baileys blow their heads off about what they did for pictures in those good old days. Personally, it makes me sick, because if you carefully analyse the whole business they really didn't

do anything. Oh! I'll admit they showed pictures in rented halls, and they cranked the handles of their rickety old Pro-jectors; or, if they lacked the technical skill for this, they took the two bobs at the door. And that, dear reader, is the qualifica-tion to become a Pioneer of the Movies in Australia. That is providing you started way back in the days of Bronco Billy or Pearl White—anything later than these "epics" more or less only entitles you to be tolerated by the older members of the limelight era. Mind you, they also give you a sort of Press Pass that gets you into the local theatre for no charge. Well, maybe there's something in that part of the business, especially when, to get a really good seat these days cost you and the missus about six shillings at least. But let's get back to those Pioneers! Let's analyse just what good they've done to Austral-ian Pictures.

It's a bit difficult to find out where to start, but—well—here goes.

In the beginning there were magic lanterns and elaborate cycloramas; then came the Pictures—that is, Moving Pictures. They just didn't take the world by storm, like, for instance, miniature golf or juke boxes. No, sir, they sort of sneaked up on you—first, that is if you lived in the bush, a chap would arrive in town, book a room in the local, order three or four beers, then mysteriously produce a poster, which, after quaf-fing his beer, he would prominently display on the pub's notice board. The notice usually told all and sundry that there would be a grand moving picture night in the Institute next Saturday; and at enormous expense to the—eh—showman? (who, by this time, was probably rewinding his programme back at the last town), the locals would be privileged to see the world famous "Tweedledum" in his greatest comedy, "Tweedledum's Battle of Waterloo," plus the heart-rending drama "Sins of the Saints." Now don't for a second imagine that this job of advance agent was just sticking up posters and quaffing beer. Oh, no! He had numerous other tasks to fulfil. Later this same gent's status was raised; he eventually became a publicity agent. Others even rose higher. Some changed to Film Producers. Such is the pity, too, because publicity men are scarce.

Well, on Friday the show would arrive. Kids from every-where would emerge and clutter about the old car—or, if you want to be a real dinki di Pioneer, the cart—and watch goggle-eyed as the projector was unloaded and carefully carried to the Hall. Next the "Sheet"—yessir, the Sheet; never the "screen." The sheet would be hung. Then—ah!—then the "Fillum." I personally can remember collecting nearly three bob for a foot of moving picture film that I found lying on the floor after the show had gone. That's just to show how valuable film could

be to kids fascinated by the movies. Films certainly had power in those days. Then, Saturday night! For miles there'd be the lights of sulkies and buggies driving in from the outlying districts and farmhouses—usually when Mr. Woop arrived he'd self-consciously tell the showman that he thought he'd better bring the kids in to see the Pitchers, and all the time his rugged heart would be pounding at the thought that soon he'd be seeing his favourite Pitcher actor in action. Then by eight or eight-thirty, Miss Smert, the local pianist, engaged especially for the occasion, would strike up the Repaz Band on the somewhat out-of-tune piano. Then, as the final chords were pounded out, old Bill Cook, the caretaker, would dash around and douse the aceta-line lights—and the show was on.

And that, my friends, was the full history and extent of the hardy pioneering days of the Moving Picture in Australia. Oh, yes; there were variations. Sometimes they'd find a permanent town and settle there. Others just couldn't make enough to pay for the hall; they left, sometimes, a roll of film as security for hall hire. But, as I've just stated, that's about all those pioneers ever did for films in Australia.

Personally, I think that the composers of "Hearts and Flowers," "Repaz Band" and "Napoleon's Last Charge" did as much to popularise the "Fillums" in those days as did the **Pioneers.** For, without "Hearts and Flowers," how could Pauline Frederick die appropriately? Or without "Nap's Last Charge," how could Broncho Bill bust those millions of Redskins? Therefore, with films ready made, music all composed for them, projectors to be had for the buying, vacant halls in every town, and an eager, waiting audience always anxious to pay their money, the Hardy Pioneer—that is, the Australian Pioneer—had a terrific task of driving his car, or cart, to the hall, setting up his machine and collecting his bobs. I'll say it was easy—the easiest pioneering I've ever heard or read about.

Now. Suppose, for instance, there weren't any projectors, or cars, or halls, or—and it's a big **or** this time—suppose there wasn't any film! Did, or could, those veterans set to and supply them? Did they say, "We'll make our own pictures, then we'll be able to collect the lot instead of having to pay almost a quarter of what we slave and pioneer for to those American film-makers?" Not on your life they didn't. That was too much like hard work—or pioneering. They were quite content to leave the making of the "Pitchers" to the Yanks, or the Pommies, or the French, or the Eyelies or the Germans. They didn't give a damn who made them so long as they could hire them; and it's like that even unto the present generation, with the happy result that the English, or Australian, language has been marvellously enriched by such expressive words as O.K., "You're

tellin' me," "Gotta date," "Let's go," "skedule," "O.K. baby," "gangster," "racketeer," "skoit," "dames," "gat," "rod," "taker for a ride, "give him the woiks, etc.

The kids learnt that only one nation won the last war; there's only one country in the world that's any good; the fashion centre changed from Paris to Hollywood. Petrol became "gas." The English wore monocles and spoke like silly asses, and always looked like 'em. Australia became the Antipodes. The only motor car of any real use was an American one; to be a real man you needed a "gat" or a hip flask. That the only real statesmen the world has ever known were Abraham Lincoln, George Washington, President Hoover—and Roosevelt. The kids can even tell you, in perfect detail, how they looked, dressed, spoke, and what great laws they made, simply because they saw it on the "Flicks." It's funny how they'll follow and believe what they see at the matinee. I'll bet any odds that if Spencer Tracey or Bob Hope came on the screen wearing green pants and yellow spots, half the young—and not so young—fellows in Australia would be enquiring for the self same styles within a week.

Why, when Veronica Lake hit the screen with her "Peek-a-Boo" Bang—translated that means hair hanging down over one eye—ninety-five per cent of the Aussie girls who had hair that long aped her. "'Smarvellous!" But it does show how the ordinary, common movie influences people, doesn't it? Maybe it's good; and perhaps you'll say it's a darn good job the Yanks are going it instead of the Russians, or the Germans, because then we'd all be wearing big black beards—or, in the case of the Hun, eating Bloodwoust and saying Heil. Confucius is reputed to have once said that one Picture is worth 10,000 words. We've certainly got to hand it to the Americans if this is the case, because even if you add up every parliamentary speech, every sermon preached, or radio show ever presented in Australia, you'll find that the American films are well in the lead by about 200,000,000 words—and believe me, or believe it not, that's going to take some catching considering that every picture of average length contains about 240,000 separate pictures. That might sound technical—but it's a definite fact.

Ask any kid who was the hero of Tobruk, and I'll wager what you like he'll say Humphrey Bogart! Ask him why, and I'll bet he'll tell you he saw how Bogart saved Tobruk in a picture called "Sahara." Ask the same kid what sort of fellow Field Marshall Rommel is, and once again I'll bet he says like Eric von Stroheim in "Five Graves to Cairo." They'll also tell you all you want to know about Al Capone or the Yukon gold rush. But ask who Sir Henry Parkes was, or who discovered gold in Australia, or what was Cobb and Co.? Ah, but they know all

about Wells Fargo or Jack London! Mind you, I definitely will admit they do know about Ned Kelly and Squizzy Taylor.

They'll tell you that Mr. Kelly was a "gangster guy" and Squizzy was a "small time Racketeer."

Makes you wonder, doesn't it?

Outside of the U.S.A. I believe that the Australian is the most picture-minded person in the world. I also believe that the American realises this only too well, because quite often recently his film stories seem to contain some subtle reference to the land "down under."

And speaking of "down under," you really should see Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer's epic Australian story featuring Charles Laughton, called "The Man from Down Under." It's terrific! Laughton acts like he imagines an Australian Digger of the last war would, speaks like a Cockney—and the supporting cast must have read that the main characteristic of the Aussie is: he fights, rapes and calls his mates bastards, because that generally is the impression that the producers have attempted to convey. Another American picture I once saw, based on Australia, had for its hero a cowboy type, complete with highly ornate chaps, spurs, etc., who rode madly over the countryside using his stockwhip as a sort of lasso, and, when this failed to achieve the desired effect, he promptly drew from his saddle holster a beautifully fashioned boomerang which he expertly hurled at the escaping cattle rustlers, "knocked them cold," as the saying goes, then nonchalantly waited for the said beautifully decorated boomerang to return to his waiting hand. I did learn from a fairly reliable source that a well-known aboriginal tribe whose headquarters are situated near Alice Springs, commissioned their reverend witch doctor to make enquiries from the American Consul in Sydney to find out if they could procure a few hundred of these said beautifully decorated boomerangs because the ordinary local home-made jobs could never compete with the one they had seen at the "plurry pitchers."

Which once again goes to show the terrific power of the motion picture.

Very briefly I can say, and say with authority, that never in the history of mankind has there been such a powerful medium for spreading propaganda, for creating a character, for selling a product, for educating both young and old for good or for evil, and further, never in the history of the world, has a nation utilised such a weapon as have the Americans. Although Hitler, too, has realised or did, realise its potential power as judged by those terrifically vivid reels he made to frighten those to whom he'd planned to conquer. I am as certain as I am that the sun will rise tomorrow, that, used scientifically, logically and with proper understanding, the motion picture

camera can and will eventually become a far greater weapon than any machine that man has yet conceived.

With the right subject, a motion picture will educate a child, teach a man a trade, show a surgeon his mistakes, record life and death, retain for future generations events of today—that ten million words could not do properly. It can open up a country, damn a country, attract tourists, sell any sort of product, and a million other things not yet dreamed of. Yessir, she's a mighty powerful weapon. Someday some real statesman will suddenly wake up that it's just the thing we need to tell the world about Australia; not only to tell the other nations, but to show people right here in Australia things about their country. Because, at the risk of being howled down, I can definitely state that nearly sixty per cent. of the people in this country know nothing about it. For instance, there are people living at Bondi and Coogee in New South Wales who sincerely believe that Australia begins at Bondi or Coogee and finishes up around Parramatta. Past that—well—there's a vast red, unexplored desert full of millions of niggers and kangaroos.

In Melbourne there's a similar crowd of suburbanites who would almost swear that Australia starts up about the head of the Yarra and finishes at St. Kilda.

Whilst in South Australia you start at the coast, Glenelg, Henley Beach, or Port Adelaide. But to go past Mt. Lofty is leaving yourself open to being speared to death by wild niggers, or perishing in the vast tract of Never-Never.

To a certain extent there are not quite as many as there were with this outlook. The advent of The Allied Works Council, or the Civil Construction Corps "did" something to a whole host of suburbanites; it uprooted them from the very core of their world of about 20 square miles, or whatever the greatest distance was from their home to the furthest racecourse, and "plonked" them on a train headed north. The shock some of those people got put years onto their lives. North! up amongst savages, deserts, wild cattle, stations, and dropped amongst people like Cinesound's "Dad and Dave." It was just about the equivalent to a death sentence. Frantic wives cried tears of anguish, certain they would never see their good men again; old mothers silently wept as their sons were torn from them. But it didn't stop the C.C.C. Off they went, feeling like our Pioneers of the movie industry, or perhaps the Pilgrim Fathers. Off to the grim "dead heart" of Australia. And what a variety of types! Ex bank clerks, bakers, butchers, urgers, bookies, bookies' clerks, punters, painters, carpenters plumbers, loafers, undertakers, cabinet makers, fishmongers. In fact, I would say that the C.C.C. expedition to the Wilds of Australia was the most motley crowd ever gathered together in this country. It

was a crowd that would have caused a Hollywood casting director to go into raptures of unrestrained ecstasy. It was the greatest transhipment of mankind ever attempted inside Australasia with the exception, of course, of the glorious Second A.I.F. And even now, if you ask any of these men about their adventures, they'll tell you it wasn't too bad. Then, when you go on to ask them about what they saw, they'll tell you about the crook beer, the two-up games, the heat, the flies and the lousy rates of pay. That's just about the only things these normal, logical chaps noticed—oh, except, of course, the pictures they saw while up there. Go into that and they'll describe in detail practically every scene, every close-up, and the entire cast of the picture! That's the curious thing about the movies. Here are hundreds of men, torn from their humdrum existences in the cities and suburbs and taken off on a Cook's tour over what could be described as the most interesting country in the world—and all they see is the pictures at the end of their journey.

Ask them the colour of the glorious sunsets, or the peculiarities of the rock formations, and they never paid much attention to them. Yet, when it comes to the programmes they saw, they'll tell you every detail!

Why? I'll tell you why. It's because of the power, the terrific power of the screen, its complete domination over an audience. It claims undivided attention; the audience becomes its slave. Nay, more! They become part of the picture. The girl emotionally becomes the fluttering heroine, the boy becomes the dashing hero. And yet I dare to hazard that in all probability every one of that theatre's audience, particularly those men of the C.C.C. or those tough, hard-bitten diggers who will trudge for miles through slush and rain to sit out a movie programme, have crammed more real action and adventure into their lives than the movie hero or heroine will have done if they live long enough to reach the pinnacle of stardom and to finally make a come-back playing "bit-parts" in their old age. And still the screen holds them in its power. I've seen tough, desert hardened diggers who, had their exploits been fully recorded, could have earned every kind of decoration, from the V.C. down, clamour like star-struck flappers to secure Bob Hope's autograph or to souvenir a bead from the dress worn by one of the numerous glamour girls that the Americans send out to the battle zones to cheer the boys. And do you know why? Well, I'll tell you. It's because they've seen 'em on the pictures!

And it's not only the hard diggers and city folk it affects; it's practically universal. I remember once, whilst on an exploration expedition into the heart of this little known Central Aus-

tralia, our party camped for the night at a place far from the nearest civilization. The spot was glorious with its Wild Purple, rugged mountains, its glaring red sand hills dotted with tufts of bright green spinifex. The sky, with its ever changing colours, would baffle the greatest of painters as vast woolpack clouds slowly changed from brightest orange to the most delicate tints of purple fringed with gold. Sitting there, gazing in a sort of artistic rapture, I turned to our half-caste native guide—"It's the most marvellous sight I've ever seen."

The guide applied a match to his cigarette bumper, spat accurately dead upon a sleepy lizard, gazed at the scenery and replied:

"Yeah, not bad is it? But if you want to see some real bonzer colours, you orter see that technicolor pitcher that was showing back at Alice Springs a couple of weeks ago. Fair dinkum I never saw nothing better in me whole life."

About a week later we again camped at a spot, still further into the vast Never-Never. The morning we arrived a band of ferocious-looking natives appeared. Here, I thought, was primitive man at his very best; man untouched by civilization or by contact with the white. Here at last were God's own children, living even as their ancestors had done down the countless centuries. I approached the leader, hoping that by signs and gestures to learn something of their journey over this great unknown interior land. I smiled kindly at this tall spindle-legged son of nature.

He grinned back at me, and then, after I had shifted a little to windward, I was about to speak. But the native beat me to it.

"You belonga mob white blokes travel thisa way, makem walkabout?"

Which I understand, when translated, means, "Did I belong to the party travelling east on a journey."

After overcoming my disappointment on hearing this primitive man speak thus, I replied: "It was true that I was a member of the expedition." I then asked him if he was on a hunting trip or just shifting camp. The reply almost knocked me cold.

"Hunting nuthin'. Me and the mob's makin' down to the 'Alice.' There's a beaut new flick startin' next Saturday called 'Mrs. Miniver,' and the mob are real nuts on Greer Garson."

Well! I mean—What I've actually been attempting to convey is that the motion picture has, without doubt, the greatest power in the whole world for influencing the masses.

CHAPTER 2

"Angels"—and Their Pets

EACH year the veterans hold a function. The password, as I've already stated is, "I remember when." It makes me sick!

Veterans of what? I've travelled over Australia fairly extensively. I've seen a picture show in almost every town and hamlet—probably the descendants of those Hardy Pioneers who once showed their pictures from the front door of the local Institute.

But, I've still got to find the real movie studio wherein real Aussie motion pictures are made, the place where real pioneering does or can take place. I'll admit we've got a converted skating rink in Sydney now functioning under the name of a film studio. I did see another little broken down hall near the Bridge telling that it was a film studio, and out to the south of Sydney there is a strange, bleak, square, box-like building with a faded sign on the roof saying "National Studios"—whether they are functioning or not, I cannot guess, although every once in a while we read in the daily papers that at last there is going to be a real film industry established in Australia!

Although film production in this country is "only in its infancy," the time has now arrived when Australia will show the world! We then wait, anxiously and expectantly, for this brilliant opus; and then, after months of reading what our own Australian Stars are doing, talks over the radio by our brilliant producers, "stills" in the illustrated section of the papers, the "super-duper" is "skeduled" for release—we're all agog. At last! At last! Our movies are about to cast off their swaddling clothes and show—yes—show even Hollywood. Naturally, we're a bit disappointed to learn that the world Premiere will be at one of the second-rate houses, mainly because the terrific American smash hit is occupying all the major theatres. But after all, that's really only a detail. The main thing is, the great Austra-

lian opus is about to "hit the screen." It's a pity that they're a little undecided about the title, too—still, "Bees in his Bonnet" is almost as good as "Ants in his Pants," or perhaps "Strike me Lucky," or "The Urger's Luck," or "Racing Luck," or anybody else's luck. The main thing is, it's the great Australian epic the world has been waiting for; its propaganda value will naturally be terrific. In fact, it should practically give the lie direct to those Yankee Films, and their American propaganda. Now we'll have our say—and we do? We rush madly to secure our seats, sit the show out, and then, when it's finally over, slink out into the night muttering, "Well, I suppose it's not bad considering the picture business is only in its infancy in Australia."

Only in its infancy! Do you know, dear reader, how long this picture-making business has been in its infancy in Australia?

I'll tell you, because it's just about the oldest infant in the world. Yessir! For over thirty years they've been making spasmodic efforts to produce a real movie in Australia; and after every one you hear the exact same excuse—not bad considering the game's only in its infancy.

Mind you, I'm not saying they were all bad pictures. That wouldn't be fair; and besides, there are quite a lot of people who would say I was prejudiced. I'm not—definitely not. I'm simply sick and tired of seeing tripe dished out by a bunch of people who have no more right to the title of picture producer than they have of surgeon or Member of The Royal Academy.

If you want to become a doctor, or an artist, or an architect, or a barrister, you've got to study, pass exams, swot up on all sorts of subjects, cut up dogs, rabbits, guinea pigs, just to see what makes them go and stop. If you want to paint an Archibald prize-winner, like Mr. Dobell, you've got to learn to draw, then study colour, find your subject, and go to it with everything you've got. And then, if you're sincere enough and have studied enough, you might turn out something really worth while.

I believe that picture producing is just about the most complicated of the whole bunch of arts, because it automatically embraces every other known art. If it's a medical picture, you've got to have a knowledge of medicine; if it's law, well, a knowledge of law is needed. That's if you want realism. If it's war, sin, history, adventure, pain, suffering, poverty, wealth—or any of the thousand subjects that go to make up the movie—you've at least got to know something about the subject of your scenario; because how in the devil can a director or an actor truthfully portray the pangs of suffering of say, an explorer, or of hunger tearing at your vitals, when never in his or her entire life has he or she missed their usual three meals a day? I know at this stage a few people in particular who will now put this book down, sneer gracefully, nod knowingly, and say, "The

bloke, or whoever wrote this, is plain nuts." He'll probably use the word "nuts" in preference to silly or crazy because he heard someone in a film say "nuts." It's smarter. Then he'll turn to whoever's near him and say, "According to this guy"—once again he'll use the word "guy" instead of fellow or bloke because of the same reason. "According to this guy, if a picture producer wants to show the young mother having her first child, he's got to give birth to a baby before he's eligible to put it onto a picture. Har, har! Or if he's going to do a murder story, before he starts he's got to dash out and bump some guy off just to know how it feels." Then he'll slam the book shut, get up (that's if he's been sitting down) and walk to the drink cabinet, pour himself a drink, if he is lucky enough to have any, then, after a brief pause, he'll guiltily sneak back and once again start reading. In fact, I'll dare him to do otherwise, because a little later on he might read about something that touches very close to that skeleton tucked away in his own film vault, desk, writing cabinet, or amongst those other papers lying at his solicitor's.

And so—on we go.

No. Just because you're going to do a birth scene doesn't mean you've got to do the unique act of having a child. But it's a darn good idea to spend a few days hanging about a maternity hospital just to absorb some of the atmosphere. Then visit a doctor specialising in that particular type of important work, talk to him about it, let him tell you as much as he will. Then have a real intimate talk with your wife, or get your "Yes" man to find out all he can from his, compare notes, study it from every angle, then, when you're about to do the scene, pay the doctor his usual visiting fee to be in attendance, and I'll bet the results (if the censor passes it) will be so realistic that half the audience will be going through it mentally. That, my friends, is how to get realism.

And it applies to almost every scene you want to do. I sincerely believe that is why American films are so gripping and usually so real. Occasionally we've seen a tiny glimmer of it in an Australian picture, but usually it dies at birth.

Now I can hear my sarcastic reader murmur, "I suppose that's the technique the great D. W. Griffiths used when he made "The Birth of a Nation." Har, Har! Still, that's the object of this story. I want everyone to laugh. None of us laugh enough, and we should, particularly when we think of all those good thousands of pounds that have "gone up in smoke" in Australian productions. And, like the great Chic Sales said in his splendid book "The Specialist," I'll tell you why all this money has gone up in smoke. It's really very simple, because up till now the only qualification you needed to become a picture producer was

to find someone with enough capital to invest—or in the language of the Theatre, first you find your "angel." When this has been accomplished you grab a story—any story will do—or cheaper still, write it yourself; sign up with a camera man and sound engineer, or if you like, engage a complete studio—you have your choice of about three in Australia; learn to yell "Action" and "Cut"; buy a loud shirt—once it used to be jhodpurs and cap with a peak at the back. Today we've advanced, we wear a soft hat, or better still none at all.

Then, after all this complicated technique, you "throw a dinner"; invite a few of the Press and the said "angel." Half way through the dinner you majestically, and if possible dramatically, rise and announce that the great Australian film is about to go into production—at last! The moving picture industry will arise from its infancy. Never mention about that past thirty years, it may awaken too many memories, and besides your "angel" may start to worry. Finally, you announce that "The Revenger" or "The Life of Bingo Smith" will smash its glorious message onto the screens of a waiting world. This last statement will usually secure you a two-inch paragraph on page four of the "Herald."

Then a few days later you again announce that the search for talent is about to start. This generally earns for the producer a four or five weeks' tour of the country, free of expense if suitable personal appearance booking can be organised combined with the usual talent quest.

Six weeks later you again make the sensational announcement that you have at last discovered the "Find of the Century"—Miss Aggie Woodcock, who henceforth will adopt the screen name of Miss Mona Joy or Rose Lovely; or any similarly alluring name that will look well in large Neon lights (you hope). After all this exhausting work, you naturally relax for a few days. Then, bang! You start production. All is silent—mystery! Keep the public guessing! You get tired of the studio so decide to go on location; a few days in the country will freshen you up—fishing in a cool lake. If it's not in the script, it's a simple matter to change that desert "shot" to a lake shot; and besides, it'll look more artistic.

Finally, after about nine months (sometimes it may take even twelve), your brain child is born. A sensational par. in the Trade papers announces that "Blubbers and Luggers" has now reached the cutting room. Ah—the cutting room—where long debates between yourself and the weary, unresponsive film editor finally result in your lovely lake scene being entirely eliminated. The carefully photographed close up, especially given to Miss Rose Lovely the day before you left the lake, is also eliminated; with the result that you stagger away swear-

ing by all that's colossal you'll import a real film editor for your next picture (you hope).

Another month passes, and then, by some stroke of good fortune you've managed to persuade a fed-up theatre manager to book your opus. The premiere arrives.

The results? As previously stated—"Well considering the picture industry is only in its infancy, etc." That's why I will admit that the newspaper critics in Australia are jolly fair and particularly decent. They never say really nasty things like "a piece of cheese," which in America means it "stinks," or actually means it's a flop—or in good old English, it's rotten. And so, once again, pictures in Australia have to be raised from their infancy.

Mind you, this is just the broad principle of the thing. Naturally there are a number of variations to the general theme. Some I propose to mention briefly. For instance, a very clever young technician with whom I am closely associated became fed up with watching the various epics being planned, produced and finally placed on the back shelf of the vault, decided that Australian films did have big possibilities providing they were produced by technicians eager and enthusiastic enough to devote their whole energies and knowledge to the work.

They would also eliminate the Traditional Press Dinner and great talent search, and generally cut out all the balderdash so that the predominant factor would be the film—to be produced with a minimum of capital and to earn enough to pay back the "angel." Everything started fine, but the "angel" became impatient. The money was going too fast. He didn't realise that the quicker it was being spent, the quicker the film would be finished. He became frightened, screamed about too much money being spent on this or that. Couldn't understand why a scene had to be retaken; why you should want to pay £50 for an orchestra when you could buy a gramophone record for two and sixpence. With the unfortunate result that when the picture did reach the screen, the cry or criticism wasn't the usual infancy business, etc., but spoilt for the lack of capital.

Undeterred, our enthusiastic young producer decided to try again. The second "angel" turned out worse than the first. He'd read the Hollywood stories of how they do it, and try as he would he couldn't figure out the Australian's technique. He, too, thought he was being robbed. My technical friend now sits wondering how lenient the Judge will be when he hears his sad story of a genuine effort to produce an Australian picture. Strangely enough, the amount involved would not cover the cost of one decent Press Dinner given by some of the more ambitious efforts.

Mind you, I'm not siding with this young man's ideas, although secretly I still believe he'll make a real Australian picture. In the interim, as I've quoted earlier, the necessity of undergoing various experiences is very essential. So if perchance a really fine picture does some day emerge from an Australian studio, with a strange (or should I say intriguing) title such as "Without the Option" or "Walls of Stone" or "The Barred Window," or maybe "The Lost Freedom"—you may recall my mentioning the awaiting of a particular Judge's verdict. Such is the arduous road to fame.

CHAPTER 3

Cut!

LET me now quote another variation of the almost endless attempts to do something about this film infant.

Several years ago an enthusiastic (you will notice that I particularly mention enthusiastic, because enthusiasm is the one paramount factor that is most essential to the commencement of another picture effort). Well, this enthusiastic young salesman, after reading the most interesting life story of Mr. Samuel Goldfish—who you, as the picture loving public know as Mr. Samuel Goldwyn—and of another equally interesting biography of Mr. Adolph Zukor, finally arrived at the conclusion that there was a big future in Australian pictures. No one had mentioned about the thirty year old infant; and besides, he was too wrapped up in Mr. Goldwyn's and Mr. Zukor's phenomenal rise to investigate it anyhow. His one burning desire was to **create**; create and give birth to something that would startle the entire world. This time it wouldn't be a Birth of a Nation. Ah no, it was to be the Birth of an Industry. Nothing small—nothing puny. But from his fertile brain would be born an edifice that future generations would gaze reverently upon, and in hushed, awed tones, murmur, "Here was the beginning of our vast film industry." Maybe they'd have his profile or fingerprints cast in concrete at the front entrance to the Studio proper. And with these lofty ideals in mind and on blue prints, he placed his dreams before the big business men of the city. Patiently he outlined his plans; such small details as how they too would go down in history as founders of a great and important national asset, with perhaps a knighthood chucked in for good measure after the first glorious epic emerged from the greatest studio in the Antipodes; or better still, the greatest studio outside of Hollywood. The salesmanship of this brilliant young man almost outshone Dale Carnegie in his Book, "How to make Friends and

Influence People." His technique, although simple, was all the more effective, because as soon as Sir Walker Samuel learned that his rival George Worthington had invested in something big, Sir Walker didn't waste much time in hot-footing it to his favourite broker to get the low-down.

Now the broker, sensing that there was something afloat, made it his most pressing business to contact all the other brokers to subtly find out "what's cooking," as the Americans have taught us to say. Well, try as he will, Mr. Welldone, the broker, can't get a line on it at all. He becomes worried; every day Sir Walker rings him for the "low down" on Worthington's mysterious actions, but Welldone tells him he is still investigating. Matters are getting pretty bad, too, because every night when he goes home he can't enjoy his meals for worrying about it. Then, when he goes to bed he can't sleep—great dark circles appear under each eye—until one day when he is about to enter his office worn and haggard, with the eye circles now turned to large, dark bags, he notices a young man staring intently at him. Finally the young man approached and addressed Mr. Welldone. He questioned him about acting ability, experience, etc., and then suggested that he was looking for film types for an Australian picture he would soon be making, and noticing the remarkable resemblance to a certain American film star—to wit, a Mister Ned Sparkes—felt that he should speak. Welldone, naturally, was highly indignant and was about to brush past when the young man casually mentioned the name Worthington as being one of the principals. On hearing this, Welldone immediately pricked up his ears. Worthington? Could it be? Was it possible?

I know this sounds exactly like a movie scenario but, dear reader, it's almost gospel truth. To make a long incident short I will condense the more complicated details as from the meeting of the slick salesman and Welldone, only to say that within two hours and fourteen whiskeys, Welldone was able to place the complete story to his client, Sir Walker, who immediately instructed him to sell all, or nearly all, his Circus and Brewery shares and buy into this great new industry.

Well—with two such distinguished names as Sir Walker Samuel and Mr. George Worthington on his list, the securing of the balance of the Capital required was a "pushover" (Americanism meaning simple).

Naturally the broker, Mr. Welldone, was let into the deal to handle the script business. I understand, although my authority is not too reliable, that even the hardened Welldone invested certain private funds of his own. Such was the terrific selling power of our young friend, whose name unfortunately I am not at liberty to divulge in case his present employers may

put another rising young salesman in his place as manager of the cocktail department.

However, I'm afraid I am slightly ahead of my story. Therefore we must go back.

We are now back. Several weeks later sufficient and more capital had been subscribed to pay for the original blue prints, etc., and it was agreed that at last the film industry in Australia would arise from its infancy, step forward and take its rightful place in the big worthwhile industries in the country. Existing studios were inspected, sneered upon as unsuitable, and lastly a site was selected whereupon would arise the previously mentioned edifice that some day would become equally as famous as Paramount, Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, or Fox.

Everybody was chock full of enthusiasm. Every available book on picture production or studio practice was devoured from cover to cover. Plans of the great sound stages, as used in Hollywood, were pored over, until finally it was agreed to send our young salesman to London with the blessings of the Board of Directors, plus an open cheque to buy only the very best. Having done so, he was then to go to Hollywood, get the best actors he could persuade to come to Australia, and return post haste to Sydney to put the finishing touches to the studio that would be standing where, only a short time earlier, a piggery spoiled the landscape.

Months passed. The studio now only needed the elaborate technical equipment that turns a building into a studio, to make it complete. Then the great day arrived. Our young friend came home.

He's spent well. In fact, machinery costing somewhere in the vicinity of Fifty thousand pounds—lights (enough to floodlight every capital city in Australia), cameras, dollys, sound equipment, microphones and gadgets were gently unpacked in the glistening new studio where once a piggery stood. But this was not all. Our young salesman, believing that it was foolish to spoil the ship, or the future prospects of such a national event, covered all chances of failure by bringing with him the greatest collection of overseas technicians ever to leave old England's shores. Camera men, sound men, prop men, make-up men, continuity women, film editors, "Yes" men, "Yes" men's assistants, wardrobe men, director, assistant director, assistant assistant directors, art directors, research directors, contact directors—and several other important people who were anxious to see Australia.

Of course there was work for several Australians. I believe the boy who worked the clapper board was a local lad—but of

course of British parentage. Then there was the girl on the switchboard and several electricians, and a number of painters, carpenters and the caretaker—although there is a slight doubt about this. Some say he was an American yes man who had finally deserted the Hollywood studios after reading of the vast possibilities for picture production in the Antipodes.

Then there was the studio. In most ways it was practically perfect. On entering it you immediately imagined you were entering a large tomb. If perchance you were to enter it today, that is some ten or twelve years later, you would be!

The dressing rooms and cafeteria were in most respects superior to those in our leading hotels. The star actor secured by our young salesman from a rest home for waiting actors, claimed, during a press interview, that it was his honest opinion that never at any time in his entire film career had he enjoyed drinking his beer or playing the poker machine under such ideal conditions.

Even in the tomb—eh, studio—it was the same. Should, for instance a fly—no matter whether a common house variety or one of the more reckless pig flies—be foolish enough to enter the—eh—studio, he would be instantly exterminated by a terrific blast of insect spray from 12 fully loaded spray guns operated by twelve specially trained boys.

I distinctly remember one day, during the filming of a most important scene. Distinguished visitors from all parts of Australia were intently watching the touching love scene between the hero, and the lovely heroine, wherein the hero had to whisper very softly the words, "I love you." The Director was tense, the camera crew were tense, the scene shifters were tense, the audience, the extras, the make-up man were all tense, even the numerous yes men were tense. The painters had fallen asleep standing up instead of in the usual kneeling position behind a large unused set of scenery. That, I think, shows how tense everything was. All day since early morn—and it was now nearly six o'clock—they had spent on getting the words "I love you" just right; 87 times the director had retaken it, and now he was about to do it again. The atmosphere was definitely tense. Then, in a far-away, soothing voice, the director whispered "Action!" The cameras were running; slowly, after tearing his eyes from the studio clock that was just about to register six, the hero, with a passionate glint in his eye, moved towards the heroine. This was to be the "dandy" of them all. The satisfied nodding of the director's head meant that he, too, felt he was getting what he wanted—when suddenly the stillness was shattered! A booming voice, amplified over the loud speakers from the sound recording room, screamed—"Cutit. There's a fly on me mike!"

That, I think, will show you how thoroughly this new studio intended to enter the business. The wife of the chief "angel" recovered several hours later, and was last seen hailing a bus, muttering that never again would she visit a film studio.

Months later—it was all over. The British technicians returned home, many, I understand, were partly blinded by the Australian sunshine. The director, too, had departed, feeling his work would never be bettered. He was certain his salary wouldn't. The star departed, vowing to return. I believe he was one of the first to make this statement. Of course it has often been used since by such distinguished visitors as Zane Gray, Fitzpatrick, Gary Cooper, Helen Twelvetrees, Bob Hope, and numerous others. Someday, perhaps, they'll all arrive together!

Then as is the custom, the film reached the cutting room stage. Thousands upon thousands of feet of negative. A task that to you picture-loving public would appear hopeless. Just try and imagine cutting, cutting, cutting, until finally the completed picture emerges. It seems impossible—funnily enough, it was impossible. Mind you, it was different—ah yes, almost thirty thousand pounds different, to anything ever attempted before in Australia. It was a picture that contained everything—koala bears, bowyangs, wrestlers, rustlers, Don Bradman, the Harbour Bridge, fights, dances, balls, music, mob scenes, bedroom scenes, pub scenes, train scenes. I believe, though, the director did forget to include a Cobb and Co's. coach; but, apart from this and a glimpse of Ned Kelly and the Pyjama Girl, it had everything. If only they had been able to join all these scenes together logically, I believe it would have at least given the thirty year old infant a terrific fright and maybe made it ambitious enough to want to start growing.

CHAPTER 4

Futility

THE futile efforts to establish this huge venture continued spasmodically over a period of several years. Almost invariably with the same unfortunate results. Three or four pictures were made—pictures that were screened, too. But to be very sincere and quite frank, they were just pictures, and never at any time warranted the huge amounts wasted upon their production—and as for propaganda value, they were positively hopeless. Poor old Sir Walker finally gave it up; so did most of those other high-minded citizens whose lofty dreams of a vast industry were now horrible nightmares. To them picture production in Australia was an empty, hopeless myth.

Meanwhile, the other studio previously mentioned continued to turn out pictures. Some even earned money for the sponsors. This, I believe, was mainly because the sponsors owned their own theatres wherein the "Epics" could be screened to the regular picture-going audiences—who more or less, out of habit, went to the pictures, anyhow! Approximately eighteen feature length pictures in all were made. I imagine it would be safe to say that four or five were moderately successful. One, their first, did smash box office records—no doubt this was the reason for the other seventeen. Always with the hope that it would, or could, be done again. Later I will give a list of films produced in this country over the past thirty-five years. In it I will prove conclusively that out of all these films, no more than two were worth one pennyworth of good publicity in any shape or form to Australasia. In fact, I think I can show that quite the contrary would be the case, and that the majority were—or had they been screened overseas—would have been most detrimental to the country. From a publicity or propaganda point of view, I also intend to point out just why these films contributed absolutely nothing towards the establishment of a worth while

industry. And yet, even now, it is not too late to do something about it. All these stories you hear today about waiting till after the war then we'll get going are all hot air.

I do not notice America holding up her picture production industry till after the war—or England, or France, or Germany, or Russia. Quite the contrary is the case. All these countries are desperately increasing their production schedules, putting into operation right now their plans for post-war continuance. From every studio report one reads of bigger production budgets, more pictures, new departures in sound and colour. Films for schools, films for churches, films for industry, films for science, films for farmers. In fact, judging by these overseas reports, the entire world will be governed by films of one kind or another. And while all these great plans are being formulated, our own Australian film infant still lies dormant, as though in death. Oh, I know it's true that right now plans are in hand to commence work on the life of a great Australian aviator. And another opus dealing with Second A.I.F. is almost ready for release and that two or three others are contemplated. Whether they ever do reach the screen remains to be seen. The Digger story will, I'm sure. Perhaps it will be Australia's first Big beginning—they can't all flop. We must hope and pray that it is the start. As for the Airman picture, I have very grave doubts. These doubts are brought about by several reasons; almost the same reasons I had when, several years ago, the Premier of New South Wales announced that his Government would sponsor the production of a number of Australian films, with the definite object of helping to assist in establishing on a solid foundation, the Australian film industry.

This, in my opinion, was just about the silliest idea I'd ever heard of—although never for a moment think I am not in favour of government support to establish films in Australia. I believe it will be essential; but certainly not the way this government did it. No, sir! Under their method, qualifications didn't mean a damn. That part of it was purely incidental. The main thing needed to get the financial backing was an attractive list of names on the share register or on the Board of Directors, suitable bank guarantees, plus certain Bills of Sale over all the assets that the proposed Film producing company owned. The scenario was incidental, apparently—judging by what emerged months later. The propaganda or tourist attracting values of the completed films, with the exception of one—were nil. And the general technique of all four pictures rated about equal to one low-budgeted American programme picture, because in a country like Australia big names on a Board of Directors cannot make successful "movies."

The only people able to do this are the trained technicians.

They, and only they, working as a team, with trained men are the only ones capable of putting Australian films onto the screens of the world.

And these cannot be trained in the complicated work unless there is some course available for them to study from, some place where they learn the finer points of the business—such as story construction, continuity, set designing, lighting, editing, dramatic values, etc. Then, too we must formulate a style or type of production that will make Australian films distinctive. This useless idea of apeing the American picture can at most only be an imitation. The Russians have their own distinctive style of work. Likewise the British, French, German; rarely do they attempt to imitate the Hollywood technique, and if they sometimes foolishly do, the result is usually fatal. Only we in Australia repeatedly do it, believing that it is the only way. I'm certain that when Australian producers realise this, we'll start to progress.

CHAPTER 5

A Board of Experts

LET us formulate and try first to create an Australian outlook —a real Australian outlook. Then, if and when we accomplish this, our next step will be to select promising technical talent. This must then be moulded into a unit, each technician to be schooled, tutored up to the stage when he becomes a first-class specialist capable of handling every filmic situation that is to be encountered during the course of a production.

Then, when this particular team or unit has passed its exams. and gained its Diploma of efficiency, it is available for hiring to any company, Board of Directors, "angel," or anyone else who wants to make a movie.

The Government's job is not to hand out finance the way they have previously—that was definitely the wrong way. Their job is to subsidise the teaching of the technical unit, foster them, make facilities available to them during their training. Then, to take it a step further, is the time to consider the advancing of sufficient capital for an approved picture. By approved, I mean the scenario (which is the foundation of every picture) must be approved by a committee, similar to our National Art Gallery Board. A committee consisting of experienced showmen, a representative of a distributing organisation, a recognised dramatic critic, and a journalist.

This, very broadly, is my idea of how a solid foundation for a successful film producing industry can be started.

It has been done in Great Britain with undoubted success. It is being done in Canada, South America, Mexico, Russia, and in every other country which is anxious to utilise the power of the movies to "make friends and influence people."

Once again I'm going to hear someone say "Rot—trash—just a lot of drivel." Well, maybe it is, but I can't say spending twelve to twenty thousand pounds on a gamble is drivel, and

that's precisely what they have done in the past. Sometimes the gamble comes off—one picture cost four thousand pounds to make, it grossed over a hundred and fifty thousand pounds. Several cost five or six thousand pounds and returned twelve or fourteen thousand, which is good. But there were a lot of others that cost from two to twenty-five thousand that haven't yet earned a thousand. That's the gamble the keen, shrewd business man refuses to take today. He wants gilt edge security, or if not that, something that will have slightly more than a fifty-fifty chance. He's frightened to invest in Australian pictures because the moment he mentions to a friend that he'd thought about it, his friend immediately recalls that he knew a chap who—etc., etc.—with the result that the would-be investor looks around for something else, finally putting his cash into a shirt factory or into a goldmine venture., Then, if he still has the urge to gamble, he rushes off to Flemington or Randwick and gives it to the Bookies.

But, supposing he knew that the proposed picture venture would be in the capable hands of an expertly trained unit; that the scenario had been approved by a competent Board of Experts, and that even before the picture was started a big market was definitely assured? What gamble would he be taking then? Of course there is an element of chance—there is in everything. But, knowing that everything was in the hands of experts instead of someone who had scratched together a group of half trained technicians in the hope that out of it all would emerge an epic—what then?

For thirty years that has been going on, with the sad results I have previously outlined.

CHAPTER 6

Our Chequered Production History

THE Pioneers? In earlier chapters I've more or less sneered at the term. I intend, before finishing this story, to justify those sneers. Nevertheless, I will confess there are several exceptions. These exceptions I will name, because I feel that they do have the honour to assume that classification for whatever it's worth.

Back in the dim past—to be somewhere near accurate I would set the date as between 1912-1914-1918—several ambitious efforts were made to produce films in Australia. And if, as the sages claim, history keeps repeating itself, we're just about at that stage when the efforts of those said 1912-14-18 are about to re-occur.

My recollections of these early attempts bring to mind the work of men like Raymond Longford. He, in association with his most talented partner, Lottie Lyall, were responsible for some very ambitious efforts. The late Cornelius Spencer, an enthusiastic showman of those early days, was the instigator of the film studio at Rushcutters Bay—which incidentally is still recognised as one today. It was here that I would say our "Infant" was born. Longford, Lyall and Spencer proved prolific producers, and from their efforts a number of feature films emerged. It might be of interest to break our story for a moment to mention that actually the first full length feature film ever produced was made in Australia. Another claim which I sincerely believe should go to the credit of Raymond Longford. is the "close up," a camera story telling effect that has proved invaluable to movie productions. Yes, I am reasonably certain that Longford can claim that innovation. But, apart from that and several other very trivial original ideas, Australian produc-

ers even unto this day have given the cinema nothing.

Now, to revert to those early productions.

A few titles that I recall from memory, are:

Sweet Nell of Old Drury
The Fatal Wedding
Fisher's Ghost
The Kelly Gang
Heroes of the Dardenelles
The Anzacs
Gallipoli
Mystery of the Hansom Cab
The Monk and the Woman
Jewelled Nights
The Term of his Natural Life
Romance of Runnemede
The Man from Snowy River
The Man they couldn't Hang
Captain Moonlight
Greenhide
Prehistoric Hayseeds
The Sentimental Bloke
Ginger Mick
Con of the Coral Seas
Pearls and Savages
Monty
While the Billy Boils
The Silence of Dean Maitland
1st Edition, or B.C.
(Before Cinesound)
Show Girl's Luck
Two Minutes' Silence
Paradise Isle
His Royal Highness
Ticket in Tatt's
Cinesound Varieties
Broken Melody
Gone to the Dogs
Let George do it
Phantom Gold
Wings of Destiny
Townies and Hayseeds
Exploits of the Emden
Moth of Moonbi
The Sealed Room
Etc., Etc.

This haphazard list is only a few of our early attempts to capture the world's market. And I will say many of Raymond Longford's pictures did reach the overseas screens and were very successful financially.

Later, this same gentleman travelled extensively overseas to further his knowledge of film production. Unfortunately, a few months after his return, "Sound" had reached the screen, bringing with it a new set of problems. However, he still had great faith in the future of Australian films, and was responsible for a number of early Australian Talkies. His interesting story would be well worthy of fuller covering, because although today Longford appears to have resigned himself to the fact that the film situation, as far as the production side is concerned, is hopeless, I'm certain that his valued experience and knowledge would be a great asset to a technical school such as I have previously mentioned. Yes, I will admit Raymond Longford can, and rightly, should be classed as one of the real Pioneers.

There are several others deserving of brief mention, not exactly as film producers, but as very capable technicians. The Higgins boys, who hailed originally from Tasmania.

Today they are still on deck, both Arthur and Tasman are still

very much mixed up in the business—as photographers. In the entire history of Australian films a picture without "Photographed by either Tasman or Arthur Higgins" would be a rarity. And what splendid work they turned out! No matter how terrible the scenario—and believe me, some of them were—none, not even the severest critic, could ever fault the camera work. Overseas critics, too, used to go into raptures over it. I once asked Tas., as he is affectionately known to the business, what he attributed his splendid camera work to. His answer was, "With such marvellous atmospheric conditions, such perfect photographic natural light, brilliant clear sunlight, clouds that just ask to be 'filtered,' a man can't film crook stuff in Australia."

By that I'm sure Tas. didn't mean to boast, because I've personally watched him and his brother, Arthur, at work. Their keen enthusiastic approach to the job, plus that joy of recording on celluloid something of Australia, will make the name of Higgins synonymous with the story of Australian Films. It's a pity their talents hadn't been utilised for far greater things than the "stuff" they were obliged to photograph.

I mention these men simply because, once again, their knowledge would be invaluable to teach the younger generation of movie technicians; particularly in furtherance to the school idea.

Of course there are a few others, but not many. We've lots of camera men in Australia today—some good, some not so good, some terrible. Recently Australia lost—nay, the world lost—a cameraman whose abilities were just beginning to become recognised. A young man who, incidentally, learnt his movie camera knowledge from Arthur and Tas. Higgins. A splendid example of my previous statement. Let the government secure this knowledge before it is too late. The young pupil I refer to was, naturally, Damien Parer. The world knows of him because of his sensational war films, particularly the Kokoda Trail, Battle of Salamoa, etc., etc.

But, as sensational as these films were, they were not the real work of Damien's, because he was truly the making of a great camera artist.

Lying in a film vault in Sydney is a one-reel Travelogue made by a keen cinema technician who could never get an opportunity to do a job that I am positive he would have shone at.

Well, this chap raised a few pounds, per medium of several "small angels." By that I mean a number of people were influenced to throw in a few pounds each, totalling, I would guess, about £300.

With this limited amount, "George"—that's the young technician—and another, who at that stage was unknown to the film world, set out in a ramshackle car for "the bush." They returned a few weeks later with enough material to cut into a

thousand foot Travelogue. They called it, "This Place Australia." The commentary was pretty punk. But the photography! Oh, boy, the photography! It was the work of a genius—its composition, its beautiful quality, was something that the world's best couldn't improve upon. It was Australia at its marvellous best. It contained more real propaganda for Australia, that is pictorially, than anything since produced, despite the brains of the Department of Information, whose job, I understand, is to publicise this country. That film, today, lies in some film vault, going to waste, while "junk" that is costing the Government thousands of pounds annually is thrown on the Australian screen with some badly produced, foolishly directed story to spur the audience to greater war effort, and bearing the title, "Produced by the Department of Information"!!!

The little epic produced by "George" was photographed by young Damien Parer, pupil of Tas. Higgins, and lost to Australia and the world by a Jap bullet. Vale, Damien.

But others will arise. They are here in Australia now, just waiting for the opportunity to make films their life's work.

From time to time technicians from overseas have arrived in Australia to do a picture. Men like Norman Dawn, who produced a near-great picture, "For the Term of his Natural Life." But Norman was mighty glad to get back to the States. I remember him telling me once, "Boy, this sure is a swell country—your sunshine beats California, your scenery is tops. Properly handled you Aussies could turn out some of the greatest pictures in the world, providing—"

"Providing what?" I asked.

"Providing you'd tackle the game properly. Providing you had people taught the technical work, as well as the acting. But you won't, because you reckon pictures are a gamble. And so they are, unless you tackle it properly." Up to date Dawn's prophecy was only too true. We've not even attempted to tackle it properly.

Take my recent list of early Australian pictures. Judge them from their titles!

Can you see anything that even looks like a boost to Australia? Of course "Heroes of the Dardenelles" was about our original Diggers. They raced up hills, as our history books tell; but, apart from that, the story was—well! Then we have our stock winner, "The Man they Couldn't Hang." That **wasn't** an Australian story really. Then, of course, "On Our Selection," which made half the people in England who saw it think we were a lot of dills.

"The Squatter's Daughter" boosted our sheep. But actually featured the bank overdraft and the terrific bushfires to which we, unfortunately, are allergic.

Later came such good publicity as the elaborately equipped Two-up Schools we saw in "Splendid Fellows!"

The scoundrels that haunt our racecourses, and the lengths they'll go to to stop the favourite from winning—such as in "Thoroughbred!"

Then the comedy epic that just quietly died before too many people saw it—"Strike me Lucky."

A few more followed. Remember "Ants in his Pants"? What a glorious boost to Australia!

Then a little gem—"The Avenger"! Dope pedlars, a few murderers slinking around the Sydney Harbour. From memory, the murderer publicised the open razor in preference to the usual tommy gun.

After that, my memory recalls "Dad and Dave come to Town." In it, it nearly proved that although Dad wasn't as silly as he looked, his numerous offspring were, and weren't too good an ad. for the Australian bush because everyone of them appeared to reach the mental age of five, then stop.

Next, "Lassiter's Last Ride." This harrowing epic showed our horrible "dead heart"—desert, flies, skinny niggers, mad camels, and a crazy white man looking for gold—if ever an intending tourist saw it, he'd head for the South Pole in preference to this Australia of ours.

Then, a rather good effort because it showed our animals—koala bears, snakes, dingoes, etc., etc. The Americans thought a lot of this one because they cut out the actors or should I say the story and made quite an interesting animal short of it.

Next—ah, let me see. Oh, yes!

"Mystery Island"—a beaut!

At the theatre at which it was shown they employed a special man to stand at the door to apologise to those unfortunate patrons who had to sit it out. Talk about action! Shipwrecks, madmen racing all over an island killing people, and a dramatic finale wherein the Parson, also a shipwreck, shows them the error of their ways. Phew!

There's a lot more.

Let's take "Seven little Australians." Did you ever see it? What an ad. for Australia! What artistry! What direction! What boloney!

Or—"Magic Shoes." This was only a three-reeler and was scheduled to show how a fantasy should be made. Mind you, it only cost the "angels" about £3,000—so I will not comment upon it other than to say it was never screened.

Then there was another more modern series, such as "That Certain Something." It was—definitely! I've no idea what it cost, but talk about a story! All I will say is that the manager of the theatre in which it was being screened turned to me one day with tears flowing from his eyes, and in a broken voice said, "I've tried to lead a decent life; never intentionally did anyone a bad turn; struggled hard to pay my way—and now, after all this, they make me show a picture like 'That Certain Something'." He then turned dejectedly away and staggered across the road to drown his sorrow in whatever way fearfully worried managers drown their sorrows.

I now definitely know that at least eight men in the industry are at this stage of my story seriously considering 'phoning their solicitors first thing tomorrow morning to discuss the laws of libel. I imagine also they're going to slam this book shut for at least ten minutes, or until their ego forces them to sneak a quick glance at the next few pages. They're going to say I'm mad, prejudiced, bigotted, cynical, crazy, or just plain nuts. Still, they're going to read on, because I'll prove every word I'm saying is right. And, what's more, I'm not suffering from any of the attractive list of conditions above. I'm probably one of the most enthusiastic believers in the future of film for Australia.

So now I'll get on with it.

CHAPTER 7

Cornflake Epic

THERE was once a picture produced in Australia called "The Burgomaster." It was, allegedly, an adaptation from Sir Henry Irving's famous Play "The Bells." It cost a very representative group of "angels" approximately £25,000.

The locale of this harrowing "drama" was set in Alsace-Lorraine. I know, because ten tons of salt, plus five hundred packets of a well-known brand of cornflakes were used for the snow, and every employee of the studio ate cornflakes for breakfast for at least six months after the completion of the picture. And what an epic! After the exclusive and toney Sunday night Preview—or I should say after the film gave its final flicker and the END title hit the screen—there was an unearthly silence. Lady So and So turned to Sir Whatsisname, who nudged the eminent K.C., who, after swallowing hard, silently thanked his lucky stars that he only had a few hundreds invested in it, and not thousands like a lot of others who were seated about him. Suddenly a figure appeared on the stage and announced that there would be a buffet supper, with drinks, served in the lounge. The audience rose, and like a crowd who had just attended a cremation, quietly moved towards the drinks. I asked one sad-looking man, whose face registered such a strange vacant stare, what he'd care to drink, and in a cracked, broken voice that appeared to come from the pit of his stomach, he muttered "Arsenic, please!" Afterwards I learned he had invested seven thousand pounds in the cornflake epic. I secured him a treble brandy.

After that Preview, the opus was never again heard of.

There are dozens of other such sad tales, but why should I be the one to harrow you with them? Perhaps you will find someone who also knows the sad story of pictures in Australia.

But, like that popular song, "Look for the Silver Lining," let's look at the brighter side of the story. Strangely enough, there is a brighter side to it.

no!—it's gone. Soon I'll tell you what it was—K.G., too, can have the secret, because one secret more or less to me doesn't matter. I've still got a lot left.

The secret of this phenomenal box office freak wasn't Ken Hall's direction or the novelty of being Australia's first hundred per cent. sound picture. No, siree! The secret was that great actor, Bert Bailey and his loyal stage son, Fred McDonald. These two, Dad and Dave, made the success, because for untold years it had been a riot wherever it was presented. Bert Bailey, above everyone else, knew how to give the Australian audiences something that they wanted. Psychologically, its effect was that whoever saw the picture—or I should say the Play—never for one fleeting second imagined they were like the characters they saw. Of course their neighbours were—but not them. Oh, no! Their neighbours had the very same opinion. The result—everyone was having a laugh at his neighbour. The city folk laughingly pitied those poor country cousins. The poor country cousins pitied their poor relations; and so it went on. Australia was laughing at itself! By a trick that only Bert Bailey knew, every gesture, every move, the way he abused Dave, the way Dave cursed his old man for being a "lousy old cow"—just like the Murphys down the creek—and the Murphys likened those two to the Jones further down the road—and so it went on.

I am certain that every close up, every gag, was the suggestion of Bert Bailey & Co., despite the fact that K.G. sat in the Director's chair and told the cameraman and the sound man when to switch on and off. Yes, my friends (that is if I still have any), K.G. no more, morally, made "On Our Selection" than he did the recent Academy Award winner "Kokoda Trail" or "Battle for Salamoa." True he supervised the joining together of the materials, but the picture or the subject was the work of others—and all this is without prejudice.

CHAPTER 8

Smithy and K.G.

NOW, with regard to the life of Sir Charles Kingsford Smith. The idea is really splendid. It could be a great picture. Smithy was a marvellous man, a man that lived every second of his life. He suffered, he battled, fought against terrific odds, starved, schemed, dreamed, laughed at disaster, joked with death and knew all the heartbreaks of being slammed, slurred, accused and abused; hounded down as being all kinds of a scoundrel, then rose to become a great world hero. And the reason—because he knew life above everything else.

Now please, Mr. Hall, you're going to put it all on the screen; you're going to show the world just how Smithy felt, lived and died—are you?—How???

Do you truly know how he felt those days up on "Coffee Royal," with the heat and flies nearly driving him mad? They were hungry, too. Terribly hungry. They ate grubs. Ever eaten a grub, Mr. Hall?

Then Smithy used to drive an old truck over a hellish bush track delivering all sorts of things to people of the Never-Never. He glared straight into the face of death—not once, but dozens of times. Stared at it, and laughed.

Have you ever stared at death—your death—Mr. K.G.? Stared at it, then laughed and dared it to come and get you?

And there're thousands of feet more required to really tell the story of Smithy. That's why I'm pretty concerned for you, Mr. K.G. I'm worried, because I **do** want to see that Smithy is recorded in a way that will be a memorial to him.

You could do it. Yes, I believe you could. But first I'm going to tell you what is very necessary. And if you follow my suggestions you'll make a successful picture.

First you must go out to Coffee Royal—or a place like it, live there for ten days, live there with exactly the same provis-

ions that Smithy had. Nothing else—exactly the same.

Then—for the next four or five weeks—tell the accountant that you don't require your salary. Tell him to do what he likes with it, so long as you don't get it.

Close your bank account, or sign it over to Mrs. Hall with strict instructions not to give you a penny for six weeks. Walk to work. Forget about dinner, or breakfast. Try not to borrow from "the Boys."

Then, after that, book a plane passage to New Zealand for yourself. If possible pick a rough day for it. Get permission from the pilots to sit up in the front with them, so that all you see is instruments, sky, and the deep green water below. Then think about the "old Bus." Think hard—how Smithy must have felt.

There's a lot of other things Smithy did, too. Try and experience some of them. I'll bet ten to one that if you do the scenario you first thought of will be torn up and you'll have a whole set of new ideas, and good ones, too.

Forget about this hooey of a nation-wide search for someone to play this part or that. That's just an old Hollywood publicity gag. I know twenty people who look like Smith and could act as Smithy did, providing you can explain to them exactly how Smithy felt and acted. And you must be able to do this, if it's to be a real picture. You're the director, you know! And—the director makes the picture—or does he?

Anyway, once again, here's hoping.

CHAPTER 9

Mr. Deus Director

THERE are plenty of people who can pump the pedals of a pianola, but pump as hard as they will, they'll never learn to become great pianists. True, it makes music of a kind, and if Mrs. Smith next door buys a pianola and borrows your favourite roll, she too can turn out the exact same tune as you. Or, take a fiddle—it's not very big; you can fit it under your chin just as easily as Fritz Kreisler. You've got the same number of fingers, too, as he has. But, just try playing Humouresque or one of those Hungarian Rhapsodies!

Yes, you say—but what the hell . . . ?

The parable is, roughly, that before you can bash out rapturous music on the piano or saw off Chopin or Dvorak on the fiddle, you've first got to learn all those little things that go to make a musician.

Building movies is the same. First you've got to study. From a director's angle, the simple mechanics of the business will be sufficient. The main job is to know the emotions, dramatic values, compositions, effect, just like an artist. Actually picture producing is very similar to painting in oils or watercolours, only with the movie camera your canvas is bigger, and instead of tubes of paint, you use film, and actors instead of models. Now, anyone with two, or even one hand, can grab a paint brush and plaster all sorts of colour onto a sheet of canvas or splash a coat of whitewash over a shed. And it's exactly the same with a movie camera. Anyone can sit behind one or beside one and yell "Action" or "Camera" or "Cut". But it's going to take a properly trained artist to turn his sheet of canvas into a Heyson, a Streeton, or—of course—a Dobell. Or, in the case of the camera, turn out a "Metropolis," an "Intolerance," "Gone with the Wind," or a "Mrs. Miniver"! See what I mean?

Let's take a glance at some of those big overseas directors. Men like Fritz Lang, who made such terrific hits as "Metropolis," "Fury" and several others. Pictures that were filmic masterpieces. Or D. W. Griffiths, Cecil B. De Mille, Frank Capra are a few of the better known names. There are actually dozens of them. Anthony Asquith, the late Leslie Howard, Eric von Stroheim, Louis Milestone, Gregory la Carva. These, I think, will be sufficient to explain my point.

For instance, "Lang," in my opinion, is one of the world's masters in the art of dramatic effect. Perhaps many will remember his film "Fury" starring Spencer Tracey. Here was a story almost, one would say, weak; its main theme was the wrongful arrest of a man for murder. The pent-up fury of mob emotionalism culminating in a terrific stampede towards the jail to break in and lynch the accused man. Then, the sensational story twist which showed two cameramen, intent only upon securing a scoop for their newsreels, forgetful of the mad mob who by now had set the jail on fire. Their only desire was to keep their cameras running.

Then the final Inquest, when a number of the alleged riot leaders are charged, and to prove their case the District Attorney utilises the newsreel to show the entire scene. The direction of "Fury" was the work of genius. Every expression, every gesture, the psychological cutting from the darkened court-room to the news reporters spitting out their headlines as the case proceeded, was something that only a trained, gifted director could possibly handle. One who knew that camera, celluloid and sound were only as paint and canvas—useless until applied correctly.

D. W. Griffiths—and his "Birth of a Nation."

Here again was the application of vast knowledge, deep research, and a transference of actual experience to a scenario that even today still shines as one of the really great motion pictures. His "Broken Blossoms" was life depicted only as one who knew it could depict it.

Frank Capra! He, too, fought his way—all the way—to the right to a director's chair. Capra was no fortunate spoon-fed favourite of someone who knew someone who might be able to do something for him. No, sir, Capra learnt his directional art the hard way. He slaved on the wharves, thumbed rides from town to town, took all sorts of jobs to live, went hungry, too, and stored all this invaluable knowledge and experience in his mental library for reference when at last he found his life's work.

Remember "It Happened one Night"? Simple but so much better than any picture of its like that it won the coveted Academy Award. Naturally the public give the credit to Clarke Gable and Claudette Colbert. Why shouldn't they? They're the

ones they saw on the screen. The director, or the "Artist," didn't appear. He rarely does—more's the pity. When a really great film is made I believe the director should be presented either before or after the performance so that an audience can show its appreciation to the man really responsible for the entertainment they have, or are about to receive. How many times does the great Conductor take a bow after his performance, whilst his orchestra sits blankly in the background waiting for his generous gesture, which is as much as to say "these blokes too helped me a bit by blowing and scraping their respective instruments"?

And after all, I dare say it's quite right, too. I've seen a rather large orchestra seated with their instruments, awaiting the arrival of the Conductor. Eventually he takes his place before them, raises his baton, and away they go. Perhaps it's the great Fifth Symphony, or "The Rhapsodie d'Auvergne" op. 72 by Saint Saens. And there they are, intently staring, with one eye on the music and the other on the conductor, their arms sawing up and down or in and out, depending on whatever their instrument. The next morning you read that the So and So orchestra gave a recital last night at the Town Hall, and although the programme was well chosen, the performance was quite disappointing—mainly because the oboes outblew the clarinets, or the strings outscraped the flutes, etc., etc.

A few weeks later we read that Eugene Ormandy, the eminent and world famous Conductor, who will arrive in Australia shortly, is to give several performances in the Town on such and such a date. (A musical event of enormous importance.)

You book your seats, dust up the old evening suit and duly arrive at the Town Hall. Then you get the shock of your life, because seated up there on that very same stage are the exact same bunch of musicians who outblew themselves on the oboes or outscratched the other instruments, particularly the flutes, etc., etc. In fact, you begin to regret buying those tickets. You've heard this mob and you know what the critics said. Anyhow, now you're here you'd better be prepared to stick it out. Then a hush falls upon the vast audience. The Conductor, the great Eugene, struts towards his rostrum. A crescendo of applause greets him; he bows graciously, turns to the waiting musicians, raises his baton, and once again, away they go. But —ah, once again. That Fifth Symphony!

But—this time it really is music. You sink comfortably into your seat and positively relax as the glorious strains cast a magic spell over you—it does things to you. The violining perfect; the low cadences of the 'cellos blending with the full ready notes of the clarinets, only to be taken up by that lone-

some little piccolo that heralds the impending clear cut notes of the brass, and then towards the climax the instruments seem to merge into one glorious tonal Rhapsody. The mechanics—or to you, the musicians—are forgotten, not there. Only that one figure, from whose hands you can almost see the music emerging—only the Conductor. Then, a mighty crescendo, and silence. You return to earth to join in the deafening roar of well deserved applause. To whom? The orchestra? Oh, no. To the Conductor; the man who made the music. The Conductor—the Director—the ARTIST; not his materials. And so it should be, because despite the oft-repeated phrase "it takes many people to produce a picture," fundamentally that is hardly right. It takes one man to produce a picture, providing he has the materials—viz., technicians, actors, etc., to carry out his instructions.

Therefore, I would place the art of successful picture-making thus:

Capable Director.

Well written scenario.

Pliable actors. You will notice I prefer the word pliable in preference to capable, because if the Director is capable he can easily manipulate or mould them into the pattern he visualises to transfer the scenario to the celluloid.

Next in order come the numerous technicians, particularly his cameraman, art director—to supply his backgrounds; then his sound engineer, and if possible the author of the scenario. An author's collaboration in the production of a film can be invaluable.

After this, the process of picture producing becomes almost mechanical, with, of course, the exception of the cutter or film editor. Here is one technician who must practically become mentally in full synchronisation with the Director if the picture is to reach the screen just as the Director has planned it. Yes, I say definitely, the cutter has almost as much to answer for as the man who directed the picture when the critical day arrives for the grand World Premiere.

CHAPTER 10

Keep 'em Here

WE in Australia have a lot of very funny ways. What I mean is, we've not much faith in our fellowman's ability to do something better than we fondly imagine we can do.

If, for instance, we read in the newspapers that Mr. John Wurtzel (whom we used to know as "Stinkwort" back in our school days) has been appointed chief of the "Society of Broken-down Film Angels" or some other such organisation, we immediately say: "That mug? What's he know about it? Why, I knew him when he never had a cracker—one of the biggest dills in the whole district." Then you go about thinking up all the lousy things you remember about poor old "Stinkwort." You tell the boys at the Club; they tell their wives, who tell the next door neighbour, whose kids listen in and repeat it plus a few original flourishes to their school cobbers, until the very name of Wurtzel represents everything from Hitler's chief Gestapo agent to Al Capone's henchman who escaped to Australia to save his "hide."

Actually, what you've done is practically damn the man simply because he had a bit more brain or initiative than you did; or perhaps he wasn't quite so lazy. Anyway, whatever it is, you've practically done for him before he's even had a chance in this new appointment.

Don't for a moment imagine it only may happen. It has happened—not once, but dozens of times.

The old saying "A prophet in his own country, etc.," is more true in Australia than in any other country in the world. The only chance a talented Australian has to make good is to get out of the country as fast as he or she can, go overseas—where they have a more than even break to show what they've got—then, when they're a success (and they usually are), come back. Providing they engage a good publicity agent to announce their

coming they'll be feted and given a reception that will do honour to their undoubted abilities. The only catch in this statement is that these talented people are so fed up and disgusted with their earlier experiences and treatment that they often refuse to return to their native land, with the subsequent loss to Australia. Then we hear the entirely different boast. "Oh, yes—Flynn. Yes, I knew him well. Pal of mine, he was; often get a note from him, etc., etc." or "Who? Professor Peabody—the eminent Bacteriologist who is now world renowned? Why sure, I knew him. Knew him personally. Australian, too, you know. Yessir, he's an Aussie"—and so you blow your head off just because his work was only appreciated after he'd left the country.

Take Sister Kenny, for instance. Soon we'll be boasting to the world about this marvellous woman. Of course we'll forget to mention that she was forced to leave Australia because the medical profession condemned her.

Then there's that aggravating paragraph we're always reading whenever he turns out a good film—"This film was of course directed by Australian born John Farrow."

See how we grab 'em as soon as someone else has made them great?

Remember May Robson, grand old lady of the screen? I daresay she wouldn't have been able to earn enough to pay room rent had she stayed in Australia.

Or those funny men Leon Errol and Clyde Cook—both Australians, and not proud of it. They've definitely no reason to be. We never did anything good for them except, perhaps, to drive them away.

Snowy Baker was another. Jack Lindsay—one of the famous Lindsay family. Low—one of the world's greatest cartoonists.

Pat Sullivan, creator of Felix the Cat cartoons.

Percival, the man who contributed tremendous advances to aviation.

And the list could go on and on indefinitely.

Professors, teachers, actors, writers, artists, scientists, explorers, inventors—almost in every sphere of progress you'll find a one time Australian well to the forefront.

Kingsford Smith was almost driven from the country, but because of his great love of it refused to go. And his reward? Perhaps we'll see it all if Mr. Ken Hall does as I've suggested earlier.

Damien Parer should never have been allowed to leave the services of Australia, and all because red tape wouldn't allow him enough to live on. America saw his genius, and money didn't even enter into the deal. They wanted his brilliant talent, and got it.

Why, do you know that just before the war anything made in Australia received almost as low a rating as that "made in Japan." Sometimes it was even lower; if it was made in Australia it couldn't possibly be any good, and it wasn't until we were forced to do things considered previously impossible that we began to realise we could do and make things, in many instances, even better than the imported products.

It only meant giving our wasting talent an opportunity. Train it properly, and presto! Made in Australia began to mean quality plus.

And that's exactly what we can do with our motion picture industry. We can make it equal, if not better, than anything imported from overseas, providing it is tackled in a sincere and proper manner.

I state definitely that right now at this moment there is an opportunity for one man to rise from obscurity to colossal heights of fame simply by taking a realistic grip on the film producing possibilities of this country. Marshal all the available talent together, and within twelve or eighteen months he will have built for himself a definite leadership in the "Industry of film producing in Australia."

CHAPTER 11

Zane Grey

A FEW years ago a world famous author, to wit, Zane Grey, arrived in Australia, presumably to enjoy a well earned holiday and to partake of our big game fishing attractions.

Now dear old Zane was clever, inasmuch as accompanying him were several employees necessary, he explained, to attend to his numerous business commitments.

The splendid news that such an eminent author was in Australia caused quite a flutter amongst those national-minded citizens. Here indeed was an ambassador who could do much to advertise the enormous tourist attractions that this country had to offer, particularly if he could be persuaded to write a book about Australia. They timidly made various suggestions and were promptly referred to his secretary, who promised to refer the matter to Mr. Grey in due course. Then one citizen, believing himself more clever than the rest, hit upon the stupendous idea of having the great Zane Grey make a picture during his stay.

A picture!—Sensational! Hadn't half the successful Western pictures produced in America been written by ZANE GREY? Of course they had! Therefore, Zane Grey would be the ideal man to do a picture in Australia—and within twenty-four hours enough capital was poured in to enable the syndicate to make a most attractive offer to Mr. Grey.

Thousands of pounds just flowed towards the camp of the ardent Big-game Fisherman, who, I'm sure, against his better judgment, finally agreed to do a story on Australia and to personally direct and appear in it. Now I somehow imagine that this same Mister Grey was somewhat of a humorist, and felt that if these Australians would persist in begging him to spend their money, he'd at least return their hospitality by obligingly spending it for them.

And so he did—all of it!

The fact that the eager Australians overlooked when begging Mr. Grey to do a film for them was that Mr. Grey, although a splendid author, knew absolutely nothing about the technique of picture producing. His only contact with the films had been to receive some very healthy cheques for screen rights to his books, free tickets to the preview of the completed pictures. I daresay he did pay an occasional visit to Paramount Studios to watch the process of turning his book into a film story—but even that would be the equivalent to a government printer's assistant visiting the Crown Law Department and trying to interpret all the legal jargon he had printed into Law Books.

So, just to oblige those persistent people, Mr. Grey prepared his scenario, worked out an acting technique, and set to work on his first movie.

"White Death" was the imposing title.

White Death! All about one of the biggest and most ferocious sharks ever to haunt the Barrier Reef. If the finished product had been anything like a picture, it would have had the wonderful or dreadful effect of frightening every intending tourist from visiting the glorious Barrier Reef for ever and ever.

However, we in Australia were in luck. The picture wasn't shown very much, so actually no real harm was done, that is, from a tourist attraction point of view. The investors of the eighteen or twenty thousand "quidlets" just had the usual "angel" reactions, I daresay, and departed into the oblivion from whence they came. Several weeks later Zane Grey returned to his home in America, after having spent one of the most interesting holidays of his life. And besides being the most interesting, it was definitely the cheapest because—well, he did produce a picture for us and could hardly refuse the slight (?) reimbursement offered for services renderd.

Of course, the story of Zane Grey could be repeated over and over again. Some celebrity only had to arrive in Australia, do a little subtle suggesting about how this country offered marvellous prospects for a really Big Film Production, providing he with his vast knowledge, were to supervise it, and off they'd go —begging him to start at once. It's quietened down a bit lately, but I'm positive it can still be done. For instance, say that popular comedian, Bob Hope, had said:

"Well, folks—I guess you have a real honey of a climate here in Sydney, especially in the vicinity of the Hotel Australia. Guess the world ought to know about it, and that swell incident when our plane crashed and we spent the night in a little hick town doing a wow of a dance called the 'Hokey Pokey,' which would be a sure fire riot on the films—and I'm spending a few weeks' leave right now."

I'll bet sawdust to bulldust that within two hours a glinty-

eyed representative of an influential group of citizens would be begging him to consider producing a picture, capital unlimited. And while these negotiations were going on inside his palatial suite, if you were to glance through the window down into the street you'd almost certainly see a down-at-heel, shabby individual shuffling past who for years and years has been trying to raise enough to finance the production of an Australian "Short" for the enormous sum of a couple of hundred pounds. He's a real Australian, knows pictures, has technical and artistic abilities. But unfortunately he's an Australian and—well—the history of Australian pictures positively "stinks." So, while Mr. Hope and the representative are debating in many thousands, Mr. Australian wends his dejected way to the coffee stall to secure his usual sixpenny lunch—and to contemplate upon the day when the industry will really start.

CHAPTER 12

Mr. Harry Watt

BELIEVE me, there is a ray of light on the horizon. Yes, a distinct ray. At first I was very sceptical. I thought, well, it's on again. The old industry is about to be awakened. A press paragraph announced that an English Director by the name of Watt was due to arrive to investigate the possibilities of producing a feature length picture on Australia. Well, I'd read that before too—but a little further on the article went on to say that Mr. Watt would spend some time studying the country before announcing his plans. Even that had been said before because I distinctly recall another English Director arriving here some years earlier, accompanied by an imposing bunch of technicians, previously mentioned in this story.

The Director (?) too, told audiences per medium of the local newsreels that he intended spending some time studying the country before getting down to the real business. He spent the time all right! There wasn't a turn or a pothole in the road that he didn't know—between Sydney and Lapstone Hill Hotel. Day after day he'd investigate the scenery along this road, often at a far greater speed than that prescribed by law, but such trifling details as "booked for speeding" were only petty pin-pricks to the ultimate lofty aims. The final picture resulting from his intensive search has also been previously mentioned. You will recall Sir Walker, and his friend, George Worthington?

Therefore, you will appreciate my misgivings when I read of Mr. Watt's intentions of studying the country.

However, I have now changed my opinions. I take back all I thought, because, here at last, I believe, is a man who does sincerely wish to do something for Australia, and I'll tell you why I feel like that.

Firstly, Mr. Watt didn't grovel and pat everyone on the back. He didn't tell 'em they were marvellous, or that Australian films were eagerly enjoyed back in the "Old Dart."

No, he didn't come at any of these time worn gags. What he did say was that we had a lot to learn. He said picture making was a real job, and up to now Australia didn't have much to crow about. Shooting dim figures in dark corners wasn't much

good from a propaganda point of view, and a lot of other things in the same strain. I will admit these are not the actual words he used but, generally speaking, that was the context. Ha, I thought to myself, this bloke's going to cop it. They'll be down on him like a ton of bricks. They'll kick him to death. Fancy having the guts to tell K.G. and the Department of Information literally that all the stuff they'd turned out was "cheese."

And there was a howl. They squealed louder than anything I'd heard since the "Burgomaster Preview."

How dare this? this?—Watt talk like this. We'll have him know we've been making pictures in Australia for thirty years (gulp)!!

The Pioneers started writing nasty things to the papers about what Watt didn't know. How they'd been in the game since before he was born—and lots of other things. By this time my opinion of the gentleman was increasing. I felt I liked him. Felt that here was something different. Anyway, despite all this newspaper holding, etc., Mr. Watt goes quietly about his job. He did, of course, do the usual thing and give a talk over the National Network; but it was a good talk. He had something to say and said it.

Then he disappears—"goes into smoke" as the saying goes. Mr. Watt had left no forwarding address—he's away for quite a while, too.

Then, just as suddenly as he left he returned. That's when my opinion of him reached its peak.

"I've been up in the Never-Never country, living, working, eating, travelling and studying those suntanned men of the outback. I've been marvelling at material for a film story that I thought never existed. I saw thousands of head of cattle being driven overland. Yes, that's it—overland. 'The Overlanders.'"

That, to me, sounded the nearest thing I'd ever heard to "The Covered Wagon" type of story. "The Overlanders." I'm certain Watt's got it! And you may also recall my little suggestion to Mr. Ken Hall about absorbing the actual conditions?

Therefore, it will be of tremendous interest to watch the progress of his picture; although I feel more than confident that it will prove a huge success, because here at last is a director technician who appears to have supreme confidence in his work, plus the vision and foresight to hasten slowly and to absorb the real atmosphere of a country before attempting to place it on the screen. That, to my way of reasoning, has definitely assured fifty per cent. of its success. The balance is in truthfully portraying what he has observed and participated in during his sojourn in that outback region. So, here's wishing Mr. Harry Watt all the best for the "Overlanders" both in Australia and the nations' screens overseas.

CHAPTER 13

Why Walt Disney?

QUITE recently we read in our daily papers that the Commonwealth Government had invited Mr. Walt Disney to visit Australia, with the object of having him produce a cartoon about our flora and fauna. We read that Walt was quite interested, particularly in that strange little animal, the Platypus—and rightly so, who isn't? But to invite a man like Disney to Australia to caricature a platypus, and perhaps a few funny kangaroos, plus the koala bears, appears to me to be past a joke. Admittedly, Disney is a genius. Just what he'd do with the platypus and the 'roos certainly will make the world rock with laughter. Yes, there's no doubt it will be funny. And as a return gesture I would suggest that we send Roy Rene (or Mo) our funniest comedian, to America just to add to the human side of the caricature.

Seriously, though, if an animated cartoon is the Government's idea of good propaganda—well, then it's time we give up altogether the idea of ever producing worth while feature production and turn the whole blessed Department of Information over to Stan Cross, Jim Russell, Wep, Stuart Peterson and Joe Johnson. They're really first-class Australian cartoonists and could, I imagine, by their combined efforts, almost equal Disney.

Don't for one second imagine that I do not appreciate Walt Disney's cartoons. I do—I enjoy them better than eighty per cent. of the films we see today. I know that his technical work in connection with the educational stuff he is turning out for the U.S.A. Government is priceless. But I still have to be convinced that his efforts in connection with an Australian subject for a cartoon would at best be no more than a comedy.

At this stage, particularly, as we do want to create a genuine film industry here, I feel that Disney would be of absolutely no assistance.

What about Fitzpatrick—of Traveltalk fame? He visited Australia, took pictures of Bondi, Manly, The Gardens in Melbourne, "The Spirit of Progress," and some pretty girls—in colour, too! As travelogues they were excellent. He was most enthusiastic about what he saw and stated that "when he returned" he intended to produce a full length feature. If I remember rightly, Gary Cooper said the same thing. So did a representative of the popular reel, "The March of Time." They all saw the possibilities, or said they did—and I imagine they were quite sincere when they said it. But why must we just sit and wait, hoping against hope that some day they will return? Why can't we get some action now? If our Government's all so keen to invite motion picture people out here, why not divert a few thousands out of revenue and formulate a scheme along the lines I have previously suggested? Then they would eventually secure good and profitable publicity.

My memory, if it serves me right, recalls the fact that originally the chief object of the entertainment tax was to secure additional revenue for the express purpose of fostering a local picture industry. As far as I know it never has been used for this purpose at any time since its inception. It would have paid splendid dividends by this time had it been used thus. But I'm sure there must be plenty of other avenues whereby the Government could still assist. In fact, a little later on I propose to offer several suggestions that I'm certain contain the rudiments of a method wherein, by the expenditure of a very nominal outlay, they would receive splendid returns and do much to establish once and for all the production of worth while pictures in Australia.

Now, let me suggest, for instance, that there are two or three men in our Government with vision. I know that at the moment the main—and rightly so, too—object of the Government is the successful prosecution of the war. That, naturally, is the most important of all. Nevertheless, we also know that vast behind-the-scene moves are taking place with regard to our post-war problems. The disposal of surplus war materials, the essential housing plans, the placing back into civilian jobs all those heroes of the A.I.F., R.A.A.F., The Navy, and all the other war time services, the conversion of war plants to peace time production. All these problems have to be faced and satisfactorily adjusted lest a far greater Depression than we have ever experienced in our whole history overtake us.

I fully realise that to the unthinking, the first thought will be—"Well, if the Government have got to attend to all these pressing needs, you can't blame 'em if they don't devote too much time to trying to do something for the picture business, which after all

is primarily an amusement device when all is said and done."

Yes, that's quite a general opinion, too, from those who do not directly realise the enormous influence that "amusement device" wields.

Do you know that by this time next week over fifty per cent. of the population of Australasia will have visited a movie show? Over fifty per cent.! That's approximately three and a half million people. Three and a half million people seated in theatres all over Australasia, absorbing intently the message, or story, that is being unfolded before them on that movie screen.

They're going to see racketeers pitting their brains against government, great lovers practising new techniques on beautiful women, the terrible atrocities of the Japs as the heroic American hero refuses to divulge the secret plans. The overfed, self-satisfied Gestapo agent tricking the loyal French woman into confessing where she has hidden her handsome American airman hero forced down in an American plane over occupied France. They'll cheer as the American Marines storm another atoll nearer Tokio, or as Humphrey Bogart, the only (according to the story) American in Tobruk, leads his tank crew towards the relief of that historic town, and incidentally rescuing a soldier from practically every allied nation in the course of events. They'll see the famous fighting American Seebees in action against millions of Japs, and rightly conquering them; or how a vast new highway was rushed from somewhere to Alaska to enable the Americans to keep up supplies to her Allies. Then, a story telling of the tremendous shipbuilding yards and how the hero discovers a new formula to increase production. Over the road at the opposition theatre, there's another eight or nine hundred loyal Australians sitting goggle-eyed as they watch the heroic American Captain of an American submarine forcing his American crew through the torpedo tubes towards the surf lashed, enemy held shore, and how the funny little Cockney cook is waiting safe in the sub. ready to serve hot coffee as soon as they capture the position and swim back to their ship.

Another Australian theatre is packed to the isles watching the greatest army show in the world—American soldiers, sailors, airmen, pin-up girls, marching, saluting, swearing their loyalty to the "Stars and Stripes" and a world famous crooner telling the world in husky, throbbing tones how the United States is God's greatest country.

The supporting picture will show how the loyal American citizen gives his last dime, his last good motor tyre, his last son, his —his—well everything he's got—so that the boys will not want for anything.

Then we see how the beautiful, soilless (despite the slush

and muck and blood of battle) American nurses save the lives of hundreds of doughboys by their devotion to duty and loyalty to their country.

Whilst in another theatre, the brilliant ace American journalist foils the entire efforts of the Axis Powers and returns to his paper just in time to make the streamer headlines—how "The New York Blurb" saved the Allies from almost certain disaster.

In the great city theatres throughout Australia, in the suburbs, the country—yes, and even in the mobile cinema shows from Alice Springs to New Guinea—it's the same. America is a marvellous nation, her people are doing a wonderful job, her factories, her farms, her navy, air force, army her every worth while activity is being shown to Australasia and Australians, showing them, telling them, and usually convincing them, that America is the greatest country in the whole darn world.

And do you blame them? Can you blame them? You certainly can't. I say good luck to them if they're clever and shrewd enough to realise the very true saying that trade follows the films. And if you want to sell anything, including yourself, tell the world per medium of the movies, because then, if it's done properly and consistently enough you can't fail. I honestly believe that this almost unending stream of American propaganda film stories is a very high priority job on Uncle Sam's post-war construction plan. Why, practically before the dust of battle had settled in Italy, France, Holland and all the other countries we're racing through now, the first, or almost the first, important job is the opening of the movie theatres to screen films —American films!

Have you noticed on the titles of nearly all these big American productions the acknowledgments to the Army or the Navy or Air Force? Why, they even place warships, fleets of bombers, battalions of men—in fact any thing the film producer wants—to enable him to make his picture authentic and good publicity.

I understand our Australian Government, or Department of the Army, have done it too—**once!** It was to assist Charles Chauvel to make his "Rats of Tobruk." I really do hope he makes the fullest use of it, because he's a very fortunate producer. Others have tried, and failed miserably, to secure similar co-operation.*

* Since the above was written, "The Rats" has been shown—and, I ask you, was it a great picture?—R.K.

CHAPTER 14

An Opium Dream

NOW I'm going to make a wager. I'll bet any odds you care to nominate to your last month's train ticket, that throughout Australia—if you were to visit every theatre, and continue doing so for every afternoon and evening for the next week—you will not find more than twenty theatres that are screening an Australian film. That is not including our two weakly newsreels. The bet implies feature films only, and—oh, yes—another proviso the film mustn't be more than three years old. Now, if the gamble's on, will you kindly send those old tram tickets to the publishers, whose name you'll locate somewhere in the latter end of this story.

The reason I'm so sure and confident of winning is because there aren't that many Australian pictures in existence. I'll assist you to the extent of saying that at this moment of writing five Australian opuses are promised; whether they'll ever eventuate or not is in the lap of the gods or whoever guides the hopes and destinies of ambitious embryo Australian film makers.

Here's a suggestion for a little, contemplative relaxation. If you've any imagination you should enjoy it. Now, let's imagine we've just filled our opium pipe, applied the match, or whatever you do to get it smoking—then lie back and dream.

Let's dream that once again we were able to visit all those movie shows wherein the various American Pictures I have briefly spoken of are being screened.

Let's do the big city houses first, eh? Good.

Ah, here's about the best show in town (apologies to Paramount). Just look at that crowd clamouring to gain admission, lined right down the street for three blocks. Must be something extra good showing there. Let's force our way through the crowd and see—why, of course. "The Great Highway"—that's

that new Australian picture about the building of the road through to Darwin. Boy, what action—what drama—what human interest—it's got everything! It'll certainly be a riot when it's screened in England and America. Been running, too, for over four months. I'll bet it's earned a fortune already.

Still, it's hopeless to try and get in to see it so we'll trot off down to the next big city theatre.

Well, here we are. But dammitall, the mob's just as big here—and no wonder. Look what's on—"MEN OF TIMOR," that epic story of a heroic bunch of Aussies. Commandoes who fought their way through the steaming, wet, slimy jungles of Timor, and their adventures as they waited to see if their crazy radio set was capable of sending a message to Australia.—Terrific drama!!

Come on, then, no good standing here just hoping to get in. Off to the next show. Ah—a chance here! Nobody about the foyer. What's this? "House Full"—curse! No wonder there's no one around. Still, we'll have to come back early for the next session, can't miss seeing this story of the "Overland Telegraph Line" made by the same company that made that great action story about Sir Sidney Kidman—"The Cattle King." Great show that; even better than that "Pipeline" story in Western Australia. Remember the run that had? Fourteen weeks in one theatre!!

It's nearly eight o'clock—come on! Let's make a dash to the "Royalty." They always have a pretty good programme on. Two minutes past eight, only miss the newsreels, anyhow.

"The Windjammer." Gee, that ought to be thrilling. All about that great wheat race from South Australia to England. Oh, and they're showing that Bourke and Wills picture again. Sorry sold out. Huh—these picture shows must be making a fortune. Hey, taxi! Out to the suburbs. Any suburb. What's on, do you know driver?

Now let's see. There's a couple of good Australian pictures on out at the Eastern suburbs. That big mining picture—you know, "Gold from Tennants." Then there's that musical picture with all those Australian musicians and dancers. 'Course if you like racing pictures there's that story about Randwick and Flemington. Remember? You know all about them big stations and stud farms, and finishing up with the Melbourne Cup.

'Course there's that picture about the Murray River. Bonzer, too. All in colour. Not too many people knew we had big steamers sailing up and down our rivers, did they? And I'll tell you what else they're showing with it, it's that Henry Lawson thing. All about the "Outback." She's a beaut.

Out in the Western suburbs they're still showing Penton's

"Land Takers." That's on with Evett's story "The Rum Rebellion." Bit deep for me personally. I liked that picture of Frank Clune's—what was it called?—ah, yeah, "Try Anything Once." Mind you, the missus likes those Lennie Lower comedies. Reckons they're funnier than any of them American comedies they used to show in all the pitchers once.

I was only talking to a bloke who got in the cab the other night after seeing that Xavier Herbert's film "Capricornia." "Funny title," I said. But you ought to 'ave 'eard how he raved about it; said he liked it even better than those three Ian Idriess Pictures, "The Great Boomerang," "The Desert Column" and "Drums of Mer." That bloke Idriess writes some pretty decent picture stories I reckon. Personally, I prefer 'em to those Zane Gray pictures we used to see—remember 'em?

Nearly nine o'clock and here we've been sitting in a taxi listening to a real picture crank, and almost forgetting we're trying to get into a show. Anyway, it's too late now, so I suppose we'll have to wait till tomorrow night and go to the local theatre. That'll be all right, too, because we'll see that big shipbuilding story made at Cockatoo Island.

Or else we can see that other success based on the construction of the new Sydney graving dock. That's just about one of the finest sea stories I've ever read. Should make a good picture. Particularly as it was written by the same scenario writer that wrote the Hawkesbury Bridge yarn.

Yessir. There's no doubt about it; ever since the Government took a real interest in establishing our big film industry, we've certainly turned out some big pictures in Australia. And they tell me that four major American companies have applied for permission to do a couple of pictures each out here. Well, maybe it won't do any harm, providing they use our Australian technicians. Shrewd move that of the Government opening that school; why eight of our best directors are ex-A.I.F. men, and look at the dozens of art directors, writers, electricians, film editors—to say nothing of all those hundreds of other tradesmen they're using in our studios—Yes, that school and government subsidised studio in each State certainly did a wealth of good towards putting men back into civil jobs.

And then there're all those others. The timber merchants, paint manufacturers, clothing and furniture makers, carpenters, painters, plasterers, moulders, cosmetic makers, carriers, caterers; and all as busy as hell now that our movies are eagerly shown all over the world. And revenue! Why, it's nearly our second biggest money maker.

Yes, our movies have certainly come a long way since those spasmodic early attempts. Remember when they started that

Smithy picture, "The Overlanders" and—eh—a couple of others?

Then—something goes wrong with our pipe. The opium runs out. We emerge from our dream—our pipe dream. Oh, of course there're still plenty of pictures—any amount—and tomorrow another big American film star is due to arrive. The traffic will be held up for two blocks, flappers will stand around the foyer of the palatial pub. all day waiting and hoping to catch a glimpse of him, a group of leading citizens will be there to welcome him, including a few politicians. A keen business man representing a group of influential financiers; old ladies will scratch one another in an effort to persuade the Star to visit their particular Club. The entire radio network will be re-arranged to enable him to give his impressions of our girls and our harbour, whether he's seen the latter or not. A couple of advertising firms would reveal their second set of books to the Tax Department if only they could get him to endorse their new shaving cream product. He's only got to say he likes girls with short hair instead of long, and within four hours every hairdresser in town will be working overtime.

And I'm willing to double my previous bets by stating that if it were announced that the Archbishop of Canterbury, accompanied by the Pope and Joe Stalin, were arriving at the Metropole, and at the same time Bing Crosby, Greer Garson and Walter Pidgeon, accompanied by Laurel and Hardy, would arrive at the Hotel Australia—the Metropole, with the exception of a few curious and devout followers would be as free from crowds as you usually find it when the beer's off.

But the Australia! Ah—now it would just about tax the entire police force, fire brigade, and the entire St. John's Ambulance's resources to control the thousands that would block up the vicinity for a mile around just to get a glimpse of our film stars, and if you were one of those extremely energetic and lucky people able to get close enough to rip off half of Laurel's coat or to grab Oliver Hardy's hat, or Walter Pidgeon's cigarette, the acquisition of such a souvenir would be the envy of your district and monetarily it would be worth whatever you liked to ask for it—based on the present day prices of junk as displayed in our leading curio shops today.

Now, strangely enough, I always believed that His Holiness the Pope, and the Archbishop of Canterbury, and even Joe Stalin, were pretty important people—and no doubt they are.

The others are—well, all said and done, they're only actors and not, generally speaking, half as important as the other visitors. Nevertheless, I am still positive I can nominate which pub. will need the barricades. And the only reason for this mob hysteria is because they're film stars—MOVIE ACTORS! Which goes to show how mighty powerful the motion picture is in creating

interest, hero worship, curiosity, and the enormous power even a few of its puppets can create, influencing as they do people of all ages, all walks of life, and who normally would be termed a fair average selection of our general Australian public.

We in Australia are not even perturbed about this power—not worrying, not caring who uses it providing a moving picture passes the censors and does not contravene any of the National Security Regulations or ethics of decency.

The powers that be—the showman, the picture loving public—don't give a tinker's damn whether the picture was made in England, America, Russia, China, or in the back yard of Gandhi's winter quarters in Tibet, so long as it's a picture with a bit of entertainment and potential box office returns. There is only one exception and that is, if it's branded "Made in Australia" they begin to get pannicky. Huh—Australian! Can't be too good. Must have bought it cheap or overseas films must be getting scarce. That, my friends, is just where Australian pictures stand today. Their reputation "stinks."

I've done my best to tell you why this sorry state of affairs exists. I've tried, too, to suggest a remedy. Maybe you can figure out a method that will help get them started solidly? They can be worth it. It could be your big opportunity: from it you can make a vast fortune, providing you avoid all those things that others have done in the past. It's worth thinking about, isn't it?

CHAPTER 15

The Actor, or the "Profession"

NOW I'm going to wander off and talk a bit about that strange, weird race apart—yes, that's right—THE ACTORS, or the "PROFESSION," wherein all men are definitely not equal. Oh, dear no. Actors come in grades, like eggs or apples or cigars, according to their past associations naturally.

It is an accepted fact that every one of us is an actor, in the general sense of the word. You start acting about three hours after you're born, and finish the day the long-faced gent reverently takes the screwdriver and fixes you in for good. And even he's got to be a good actor. Underneath that long, miserable face there may exist a streak of natural humour equalling Robert Benchley or Bob Hope—but he's acting sad, and he's paid for it. Just imagine how long he'd last if, as he silently stood there awaiting the signal to "screw 'er down," he suddenly burst into a "We're off to see the Wizard, the wonderful Wizard of Oz"—or "There'll be a hot time in the old Town Tonight." I mean—he just can't do it, much as he would like to. He's got a part to play, so he does it. It's the same with some of those judges you come up against now and again (particularly if you're in the film business). They're actors. Not always good. They don't have to be, and it's as well they're not because no one wants a judge to hand out an encore, especially if it's directed straight at you. Nevertheless, as I've just said, they're actors.

Next time you're up—just try and study the way he acts. Take a look at his make-up—usually he's not too good on this. His wig doesn't fit too well; probably secondhand. Then again, he's got to sit up there and try and convey the impression that he's listening to all that's being said. If it's technical evidence, such as medical stuff, cadavers, and all the other terms the B.M.A. like using; or if it's a divorce case he's supposed to know all about those intimate, personal little matters that are

usually marked with a dash when recorded in the press—adultery, compromising situations, etc., etc. There he sits, nodding knowingly every now and again as though he's perfectly familiar with every phase of this particular branch of life. But, remember, he's acting. When the legal bigwigs start their For's and Against's and drone on hour after hour with their meters registering the costs, all the time you'll notice occasionally, if you look up, that the judge man is intently taking notes. Now, I'm not certain, but I've a very grave suspicion that if you could extend your eyeballs out from their sockets and over the heads of the still droning lawyers and focus them onto the judge's notes, you'd find that he was scientifically picking out the winning double for next Saturday, or else working out the profit the Black Market dealer made on the last three bottles of Scotch he's sold him before he returned from the luncheon adjournment.

That proves he's a fair actor, because the audience, i.e., barristers, lawyers, reporters, jury, orderlies, onlookers, and the bloke who's going to get it in the neck, all sincerely believe he's been writing down and weighing justice in the balance.

They're all actors.

Judges, undertakers, preachers, salesmen; no matter whom you mention, they're actors. Some don't even realise it. They're what we call the unconscious actors—others are conscious actors. Then there are the hams. Actually "ham" is a term applied to those whose best job of acting is fooling themselves that they're actors—it is short for "Hamlet." And, deah boy, unless you've done Hamlet you are not truly of the profession. An actor lives in a world apart; his world is a world of dreams, hopes, more dreams, more hopes.

The actor I am speaking of now is not the "You and I" type, but the specimen that inhabit the theatres, poverty points and cheap boarding houses. He perpetually dreams of his engagement with "Bland Holt." His forty "sides" in "The Silver King," or the "heavy" in Uncle Tom's Cabin." Ah, yes! Then he spends a period of "hopes" wherein he hopes his talents will be soon recognised; hopes the landlady will extend his rent; hopes that the pawnbroker hasn't sold his treasured evening suit or his presentation watch. Verily, he's a strange being, this actor of the old school.

Later, with the advent of broadcasting, a new species came into being. These were the Radio Actors. The ability necessary to enter this much more profitable branch of the profession was varied. If, perchance, you possessed the gift of being able to change your voice, you immediately created a demand for your services—it was easier for the Radio people to pay one man with

two voices than to engage two separate people. The fortunate owner of these two voices, however, soon woke to this lurk and demanded double pay, and as the Radio people realised the game was up, they reluctantly agreed. This was the commencement of a most phenomenal era. Actors began to realise that to have more than one voice was a tremendous asset and immediately began cultivating new and additional voices. Here, indeed, was something revolutionary. Actors' boarding houses became madhouses; landladies used to lie awake all night with their ears pricked to hear various conversations issuing from their lodgers' rooms. Sometimes there would be high-pitched voices arguing with deep bass ones. Sometimes the landlady would swear she had heard men making violent love to one another and from the type of man she thought he was, wondered that she had never noticed it before.

High voices, low voices, foreign voices, squeaky voices, effeminate voices, German voices, Mexican voices, the voice of the ghosts, the hissing voice of the murderer, the sinister voice of the blackmailer, the snarling voice of the big business man, the cringing voice of the parson, the silly voice of "Dave," the gibbering voice of the idiot, the professional voice of the doctor, or the "putting away" voice of the judge, the sea captain's voice, the dashing hero's voice—and every other known brand of voice —was heard throughout the boarding houses and residentials wherein actors were known to congregate.

Then, when most of the new school of radio actors felt they had the business by the seat of the pants—a bombshell burst upon them! The very substance of their existence was in jeopardy! Calamity was upon them. Their long hours of larynx straining were for nought. No longer was it an asset to possess two voices. Two voices?—just nothing at all! Because amongst them had come a man who alone could do the lot; not two, or three, or even four voices, but the whole blasted lot—twenty, thirty, nay even forty if necessary. He could do 'em all. Here amongst them had come a menace, a scourge, a curse upon their dreams of future affluence. One man who could eliminate practically all of them, simply because of his unnatural gift of the gab in so many voices.

He became a sensation. Every home with a radio set knew of him; knew that no matter how big the cast was, the whole darn lot was played by this vocal genius. His name became a household word. Short plays, long plays, serials, comedy sketches, historical dramas, fantasies, blood-curdling melodramas. He took them all in his stride. His fame spread throughout Australia. In two years he was well on the road to accumulating a fortune. His humble sixpenny cigars changed to the Corona

Corona de luxe variety. Instead of his occasional two bob bet at the races he acquired a couple of racehorses. He put on weight. He'd clicked in a big way on the radio—but only on the radio, because at best the radio is only a voice combined with a series of sound effects; it'll kid you into believing almost anything if you listen long enough. It forces you to concoct your own mental picture of locales, types, situations, etc., etc., which actually is not good for the simple reason that no two people, given the exact same description of a particular incident or location, could mentally visualise it exactly as their neighbour.

Tell Bill Jones and Bert Smith that the story opens at the dilapidated old house. The midwinter wind howls and shrieks amongst the twisted, gnarled branches of the trees as it races on, straining the shuttered windows almost to breaking point as on its ferocious journey it pushes before it those heavy black clouds that race past the watery moon. On—on, toward some mountain top rendezvous, to mass, as would a great black army before penting their wrath upon a racked and decadent earth.

That, dear reader, is a fair average sample of our vocal genius build-up for his new blood-tingling thriller. Throughout the entire, grimly-spoken dialogue, the musical effects, combined with loud crashes of thunder and intermittent howls of wind, are carefully interwoven to heighten the dramatic effect. Good! Now switch off the radio and ask Bill Jones just what sort of mental picture this dialogue created for him. I daresay he'll start off by saying he'll bet quids it's a murder story. The house, of course, is haunted.

Even at this moment the still warm body of a murdered person (probably a small, silver dagger sticking between his shoulder blades) is lying up there in the heavily curtained library. Naturally, too, the figure that has just slunk out into the stygian blackness was the old man's nephew who, after months of planning, had accomplished the perfect crime. No doubt Bill Jones will be able to go on for at least another hour giving you the full details.

But we shut him up and turn to old Bert Smith. He's formed his opinion, too, about it. "Jones is plain screwy, with his haunted houses, murdered men, silver daggers, and what have you."

"The whole thing's an advertising play about an after-hours' pub in the slum areas of a big city. The bloke who sneaks to the door is a customer who's just bought a couple of bottles of beer and perhaps a bottle of rum to warm him up seeing as how he's been out in the rain all the evening. And judging by the clouds that're working up it looks as though there's going to be a real snorter thunderstorm before the night's out."

So there you have it. Two people, both with about an equal amount of intelligence, both hearing the exact same description, and both giving an entirely different version of it.

And all over the country where people had been listening, no two could mentally formulate the exact same picture, simply because the spoken word, like the written one, although very powerful is only half complete. It needs vision allied with it to make it complete. Thus my contention—the talking picture is undoubtedly the greatest medium man has yet conceived to further his progress. We in Australia apparently don't believe it. Or those who do, unfortunately through circumstances over which they have very little control, are unable to find the necessary assistance to successfully prove their theories.

So, because the powers that be seem quite content to spend thousands of pounds on buying radio time to deliver their policies, messages, and whatever it is they wish to sell or tell, our thousand-voiced freak and all the other voices engaged to keep these great radio stations on the air are making "hay" while the sun or moon shines. What their personal appearance is like doesn't matter a hoot. It's the voice that counts—and so we have our RADIO ACTORS!

If, and when, television arrives there's going to be chaos amongst them. Just imagine that beautiful, expressive, heart-throbbing voice of the hero of a million stirring adventures, whose every word drips romance and heroism, suddenly bobs up on the television screen, revealing him as an undersized, bald-headed, watery-eyed little runt who wouldn't be capable of stirring the emotions of my old maiden aunt Agatha who's been searching for a man for forty years. Or that silky, voluptuous, seductive voice of your favourite heroine who, in every thrilling episode of "Satin, Sex and Sadism" falls tremblingly into our hero's waiting arms, happy in the knowledge that he will guard and protect her "forevah." Then to see her turn up on the television outfit as at least sixteen stone; four chins, thick horn-rimmed glasses and a semblance of moustache. Then watch these two—the hero as described and our heroine—once again doing their hot stuff! It's a kind of "what you don't know won't hurt you," isn't it? In fact, you're only getting half of the show over the radio.

Still, our powers that be stick to it like glue to a blanket. Of course the radio is very essential. It's uses are countless: news broadcasts, police messages, quick nation-wide announcements, the supplying of good music, particularly to the unfortunate blind, or to the farmer waiting on his weather reports, market prices, and other important functions where the voice

can adequately convey the message. But as a real hundred per cent. propaganda medium the radio is only half there. Only the motion picture can fully cope with it satisfactorily.

Therefore, allow me to issue the following dire warning to all those golden-voiced heroes and heroines of the radio: to watch out, watch that thinning patch, that expanding girth, or anything else that's likely to go out of shape or generally distort as time marches on—because television is a reality and a certainty; and television, basically, is only another form of motion pictures.

There are hundreds of varieties of actors. Too numerous for me to numerate here. Enough to say that never at any time is a motion picture producer or director justified in wasting hundreds of his sponsor's good pounds on a talent search—which, after all, is an old Hollywood gag to increase interest in the forthcoming super-super colossal epic soon to be produced. Today in Australia a really good film producer need only spend a couple of days standing on a busy city street corner and he'll be able to find enough types to make a dozen films.

Ah, but what about acting ability you smirkfully ask? Acting ability? That's an old carry-over phrase from the good old legitimate stage days. There acting, or the capacity to remember pages and pages of dialogue, over exaggerated gestures and a voice strong enough to reach the highest seat in the "gods"—then if your make-up was right and you put enough venom into your villinous snarl, or denounced Sir Mortimer Blotz with sufficient vigour and were able to support the swaying heroine in your manly arms, and still remember your lines without relying on the prompter too often—you were a good or passable actor.

With movies it's different; much different. Some of the biggest successes in pictures were and are made by total strangers who previously had never even seen the inside of a production studio. Truck drivers, waitresses, cloak room girls, painters, electricians, hoboes, salesmen, doctors, lawyers and sailors or soldiers. Somebody standing on a street corner spots them, drags them off to the studio for a film test, and if they possess a normal intelligence, a good director can do the rest. There's going to be hundreds who will definitely not agree with me on this point, but it's a proven fact. It's being proved every day—why, I've even done it myself with excellent results.

If possible I'm going to convince you, and knowing that you're quite healthily and mentally normal, I have not the slightest doubt I will succeed. To do this I will submit a sample sequence of a motion picture shooting script. That is, the story broken

down—or mechanised, as it is termed—so that from it the numerous technicians are able more easily to follow the mechanics of the scenario. The director himself—that is, if he's a good director—doesn't actually require a "breakdown script." His knowledge of dramatic values and emphasis are all fully planted in his imaginative mind. Nevertheless, to save hours of wasted debates trying to explain the whyfors and wherefors, he has his breakdown or shooting script.

Now for our scenario.

CHAPTER 16

SCENARIO

No 1— The scene fades in to show a picturesque little flower covered cottage. It is evening.

No. 2— Insert exterior shot showing the sun slowly sinking in the West.

Soft music is heard.

No. 3— Cut to medium shot towards the rose covered doorway of the cottage.

No. 4— Insert close shot showing the neatly painted name "EMOH RUO."

No. 5— Cut to med. long shot. The door of the cottage slowly opens.

Music softly playing "Home Sweet Home."

No. 6— Exterior day.
Med. long shot with camera travelling slowly closer to a close shot.

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The door opens and Rosaline appears. She sighs deeply as she gazes at her baby, clutched lovingly at her breast.
Rosaline speaks.

Rosaline
"Hush my darling, daddy will soon be here."
She gazes from right to left.

CUT

No. 7—

Exterior. Evening.
Long shot.
Camera shooting low along the dusty country road.

Bird sounds heard.

No. 8—

Cut to med. shot.
Claude, Rosaline's young husband, staggers towards camera. He is unsteady on his feet.

No. 9—

Cut to close shot showing the beer sodden face of Claude.
He gazes blankly about him. Then reaching into his hip pocket produces a bottle.

Claude:
Ah———
He places the bottle to his lips—and drinks.

No. 10—

Cut to—
Med. long shot
Towards the cottage.
Rosaline walks to the white painted gate.
She is still carrying her baby.

No. 11—

Cut to full close up showing Rosaline.

Suddenly she gives a start and hugs her child closer.

No. 12— Cut to med. long shot to show Claude — who removes the now empty bottle from his lips, and stares angrily at it.

No. 13— Cut to full close up of the empty bottle.

No. 14— Cut to med. shot of Claude. He hurls the bottle from him.

Claude:
(thickly)
Empty!

No. 15— Cut to med. long shot showing Rosaline. Tears well up in her eyes. She mutters brokenly.

Rosaline
(with emotion)
Drunk again, oh God!

No. 16— Insert full close shot of the innocent babe.

the babe
(if possible)
Goo! Goo!
(which probably means "You're telling me"!)

No. 17— Cut to long shot showing Claude staggering towards the cottage. Camera follows, or pans Claude as he moves towards his sorrowing wife.

No. 18— Cut to medium shot. Claude reaches the gate.

No. 19—
Cut to a two shot.
Claude faces Rosaline.
Her tears fall onto the babe's shawl.

No. 20—
Insert close shot of the tears falling on shawl.

Soft sad music heard.

No. 21—
Cut to med. two shot.
Claude wipes his shaking hand across his bleary eyes.

Claude:
Spying, eh?
Rosaline:
Oh, Claude!
Claude:
Shurrup!
He makes as if to punch Rosaline.

No. 22—
Cut to close up of Rosaline; she hugs the babe closer.

Rosaline:
But—our child's medicine

No. 23—
Cut to close up of Claude.
He grins evilly.

Claude:
Shurrup!!

No. 24—
Cut to medium shot.
Rosaline stares hard at her drink sodden husband.

Rosaline:
You cur! You've spent the money on drink.
You cur!
Claude:
Myoath!

No. 25—
Cut to close shot of innocent babe. It is crying.

No. 26— Cut to close shot showing Claude.
He glares at the child.

Claude:
Always howling. What a kid!

No. 28— Cut to med. shot showing Rosaline facing Claude.

Rosaline:
(dramatically)
Stop, oh stop! Our child is sick.

Claude:
Bah!—So'm I!

Well, dear reader, so it goes on. Cut to this, cut to that, throughout the full scenario. Rosaline leaves Claude, who naturally goes from bad to worse. Then she secures a job in a factory where she meets her employer's handsome young son just returned from the fighting front. He sees her, she sees him. They fall in love.

You know how it goes. You've seen it thousands of times; it's the stock tear-jerker of the movies.

But, as I've tried to point out, you'll notice this business of cut to—or insert—or change to. The hardest worked person on a movie set is the joker who lumps the heavy camera from cut to cut. Every cut is usually a change of machinery set up, re-focussing, fixing the lights, attending to the tear-stained make-up.

And all this while, the actors in our case—Claude and Rosaline—are taken in hand by the director, who coaches them in their next line of dialogue. With Rosaline he must show her how to say, "You cur!" etc., etc. There's no trouble about remembering pages and pages of typewritten lines—at most they're usually no more than twenty or thirty. The main thing is to say it correctly and that's the director's job. He's got to patiently explain the proper emphasis, the way to look, the way to clutch the child.

It's really not a big job, for anyone with normal intelligence—but it is a painstaking task for a conscientious director. But it can be done; has been done, and will be done so long as people demand pictures.

So you see, the making of pictures is simply photographing a series of little cameos that are eventually pieced together to make a complete whole. The acting is as good as the man controlling the players, and I'll openly defy anyone to deny it. If necessary I can back it up—and openly take three or six people from a city street and pit them against any similar number of experienced stage actors. If my street picked players cannot equal your experienced actors on a given section of scenario, I'll chew this story page for page until I've eaten the whole blessed thing.

CHAPTER 17

The Secret

TO revert once again to my original contention, the main ingredients in the production of a successful motion picture must be a properly trained director with a well written scenario. Given this, plus freedom from petty trivial worries and cares, and he'll invariably deliver the goods. Therefore, let us analyse the secret of commencing the establishing of a solid production industry.

First, let us choose those who should develop into first-class producers, writers, directors, cameramen, sound engineers, editors, and the other people necessary to follow out the director's plans. Then let us train them, give them sections of scenarios to practice upon, lecture them either from papers used in the Academy courses that could be secured from overseas. (In America there is a Chair of Cinematography and its allied Arts.) The course is highly technical and required a high aptitude test before admission is made. Then in the school's own theatrette show them the work of the various recognised producers, point out the value of lighting, the correct use of sound. I've known some local film makers who, after discovering that sound recording costs somewhere in the vicinity of one shilling or one and sixpence a foot, thereupon immediately decide to put one or two words on every foot he pays for. The result is usually an illustrated lecture or a radio play illustrated with pictures of the players strutting about, usually always facing the camera and talking like mad auctioneers, fearful lest they don't get their two words per foot of film.

So much for ignorance. Do you know, some of the finest motion pictures I've ever been privileged to see were almost fifty per cent. silent—or I should say, devoid of dialogue. Take, for instance, the terrific opening of Orson Welles' "Citizen Kane"—thousands of feet of silence as the camera moved over

the misty landscape, wending its way over the great iron gate, through the wooded grounds up the ivy covered walls of the old home, up towards the barred window, through it and then gently panning around until it reached the bedside of the dying man. One word—"Rosebud!" Then silence. The camera then moved on towards the door, through it to the stairs, and so on. Thousands of feet of what our alleged Australian film maker would call waste of good sound track.

Then remember "Wuthering Heights?" The dramatic silences did more to make that picture the success it was than all the dialogue ever written.

"How Green was my Valley." The unusual opening as the old mining township was established; the smoking chimney stacks; the tired, grimy miners making their way home; the great, ugly slag heaps. Then the voice saying, "I'm leaving the valley"! What a wealth of meaning that simple sentence conveyed! That, I think, is one of the secrets of making big film successes—silence. The elimination of unnecessary trite dialogues.

Alfred Hitchcock is a recognised master of dramatic suspense. His secret is low key lighting. The power of suggestion—a shadow instead of the actual person, a squeaky door, a footstep, a loud knock. Everyone of these effects count more than a hundred words. Yes, dialogue attached to a picture is not the most successful way of creating a masterpiece. The art of cutting it down to a minimum is nearer this objective. Let the picture tell the story.

First select your likely technicians and future Griffiths, De Milles, Capras, La Carvas. Train them, then as they reach the stage when they're fairly proficient, entrust them with the producing of a short featurette five hundred or a thousand feet —propaganda or any subject you care to choose. Then, when they've done it, screen it, analyse it, compare it with similar overseas products. It should be very promising and worth the small outlay to the college sponsors. Have scenario competitions. Pay reasonably good prizes for the best ones.

Let some of those big overseas organisations that have taken hundreds of thousands of pounds out of the country in film rentals, subscribe to a small levy based upon the number of features they have released over the previous year. Or add another halfpenny on to the admission charges. But first fully explain to the public what it's for. I would imagine they'd pay it willingly, for such a worthy cause.

Since the war, the motion picture interests in Australia have organised and raised millions for the war effort. The average Aussie showman will willingly get behind any worth while project. He'll work like the devil to assist in raising funds for a good cause. Let's put the proposition of raising a quar-

ter of a million towards the establishment of a real Australian film producing industry—something that eventually will return him for every bit of effort he's put into the drive. He'll be able to screen Australian features that he'll be proud of, and also get a glow from the thought that he was in no little way responsible for its creation. Let him do that and then some day he will justly be entitled to adopt the doubtful honour of being one of the Pioneers, and when the "I remember whens" start flowing he'll be able to join in and say "I too remember when pictures were only in their infancy in Australia." But now! Thanks to me and all my associate theatre proprietors, we've got a worth while "Made in Australia" show on right now and another one to follow after this present one's finished its record breaking run.

That I think would be a real national effort, and just why shouldn't these theatre men do it? Not from a "How much can I get out of it angle," but a national Australian attitude. Never in the history of the cinema have the "Flicks" been as popular with the masses as it is today. Never have the Full House signs been used so consistently as they have since the beginning of the war. Never have these showmen been so prosperous. It's going to be a real thanks offering to those people who make all this prosperity possible, i.e., the film maker.

All we need, then, is that far-seeing man to arise and set the wheels in motion.

At first it's going to be an uphill fight. So was New Guinea, the Middle East and a few other hopeless looking jobs, until we Aussies really got stuck into it. Then the harder we hit the easier it became, until now it looks as though nothing will stop us. So, if that man's about, let him peel off his coat and get started—because never before has the time been so opportune as at the present moment.

In going over several of my previous assertions, there are two or three statements that I feel should be clarified a little more. For instance, when I stated that my three or six street selected players would equal a similar number of experienced stage actors, I never for one moment meant that a grounding in legitimate stage craft was not a definite asset. It is—it can be of inestimable value providing certain points that are most essential to the successful stage artist are forgotten when the said successful stage artist makes his or her movie debut. For intance, exaggerated gestures, so necessary to the stage, must be considerably modified for the screen, otherwise the performer is almost certain to be called a "ham" or his performance "hammy." His training of rigid exits and entrances must be cast aside. The old gag about never turn your back to the

audience. These are only a very few of the important "forgets" very necessary if the "Legit." player hopes to make good. There're a whole host of other things, too. That's why I claim that by the time our good director has taught the stage actor all the "don'ts" it will be just as easy, if not easier, for him to show the "street" selected player what he wants him to do, because for a start he doesn't have to unlearn something; and generally it is much easier to learn something than to unlearn little tricks and mannerisms that have taken years to acquire.

I daresay the exact reverse could be said about film players when they get ambitious enough to want to tackle the stage. Often I've heard it said that so and so, although a top rank film star, is just a very green beginner on the legitimate stage. And that, I suppose, is only because films and stage, although usually always associated as the acting profession are in reality two entirely different forms of art.

I personally know several very clever sculptors; their modelling borders closely upon genius; they are recognised as great artists. But, give them paint and canvas, and their work becomes less than mediocre, simply because their art lies in a different sphere. Likewise, there are many first-class electrical engineers capable of handling thousands of volts, and who can undertake all manner of electrical power control. They pass many exams. before being granted a licence to practice electricity. But give them a radio set to adjust or build, and they're sunk. The self-same power that they are so familiar with in their chosen profession, becomes something strange and mysterious immediately it enters a radio set.

Certainly there are plenty of electricians who successfully master radio and its intricacies. Just the same, as there are players equally at home before the footlights as what they are in front of the cameras. But they don't just fluke that fortunate power; it has to be learned. They've got to know when to forget one technique and adopt the other.

My object in pointing this out is to propound my theory that it is not necessary to have a stage training before you can become a film star; although the reverse may not be the case. Therefore, in conclusion I must only repeat my original assertion that my three or six selections from the city street versus your experienced actors—etc., etc.

CHAPTER 18

The Necessary "Yes" Man

THROUGHOUT this, my setting down of (in almost every incident) personal observations, I have not attempted to give a chronicled history of the movie production in Australia in any strict form of sequence. Rather I've wandered here, there and everywhere, with the sole object of analysing this, the most intriguing and fascinating business in the world. My suggestions, criticisms (insults, if you regard them as such), are only put forward with the sole object of spurring those who are intent upon making it their life's work. I do believe all I have written. I know to many it will seem disjointed and rambling. I intended it should be. I've always found that you observe more in a casual ramble than you do by racing directly to a fixed object, and as the movie business is so vast and all-embracing that to analyse it with a detailed outlook it is essential to wander away at times, so that you see small important details in retrospect, or from a different perspective.

Many of my beliefs, naturally, will cause debates. Some will even without a moment's hesitation claim that I am talking through the top of my hat. Others will say I'm prejudiced or applying the "sour grapes" attitude. I immediately deny all these suggestions. I want to start debates, arguments. I want people to start talking—asking questions, to condemn me if they wish—anything, so long as I can stimulate sufficient interest in Australian movies. To do all this would make me feel that my pen has not been used in vain. I can almost hear some learned journalist saying, with sorrow and pity in his voice, "Why, it's not even written correctly." Well, what's that matter? It's written, and presumably read—and I'd rather read a badly written yarn that contained interest than a beautiful literary correct story containing glorious word groupings, with a central theme about basically nothing.

So, should parts (or a great deal) of this my pet subject jar upon your more sensitive literary taste, please! please cease reading, lest I hurt you even more before I reach that last chapter! Or should I say—before the fade out?

There are a number of matters I am now going to discuss that I feel will be of some interest to those who desire to see this industry develop.

I believe that the construction of huge studios or sound stages are not necessary as a first move towards successful picture production in Australia. My reason for stating this is because we possess the finest climatic conditions in the world for picture making, and I am of the firm opinion that the films that will create world interest will be of the great outdoor variety—for at least the first two or three years.

The perfect climatic conditions are not, as you would suppose, in sunny New South Wales, which today is the headquarters of most of the processing laboratories. But for production work we must establish **our** headquarters in South Australia, North of Adelaide, up towards Quorn, or near the Central Australian border. For it is here that the clear brilliant light, combined with long stretches of unchanging weather, is a cameraman's paradise. You will say—but who's going to travel away into the bush to get a job in the picture studio up there? Or—how will it be possible to collect all the necessary paraphernalia, contact "bit" players, and to get prompt laboratory attention? I can only point out that I am simply making my suggestions as to the best conditions for production work, and must refer you to Hollywood itself which, before the advent of movies in America, was an almost unknown orchard district. The chief reason for its selection as the picture centre of the world was because of its climatic conditions—and remember, "the trade follows the film." So, with our headquarters high up in South Australia, I have no doubt the subsidiary adjuncts to our business will automatically follow us, including a boarding house for actors.

Next I wish to touch upon a somewhat hard and confusing subject, and that is, just what type of individual would this ideal film director be? I can only say sincerely I do not know. But I do know this, that were I, as a sponsor, contemplating the making of a picture I would look carefully about me for a person who knew life—life in all its phases. A person who, no matter his status—whether he be rich, poor, honest, or even dishonest wouldn't concern me—so long as he was capable as a technician and enthusiastic enough to want to produce a picture. Naturally I would take incidental precautions lest my opinions and trust be misplaced, but I feel that a sincere director, whose only desire was to make a good film no matter

what his personal history was, would be a far safer bet than that unblemished, steady individual whose character and life story consisted of birth, babyhood, boyhood, schooldays, high passes in reading, writing and arithmetic; then his first job, regular hours, regular habits, study at night school—until the lure of the films tempts him to make the greatest decision of his life—i.e., leave his one and only job and offer to make my film.

How broad would it be? How vast its horizon? How deep its emotions, its down-to-earthness? No—I am afraid—despite the shocked exclamations I can almost hear—I must give the chap who knows how it feels to be hungry, broke, kicked from pillar to post, sat upon, jumped on, slammed, punched, slandered, cursed, distrusted and almost all the other vices—so long as he shows me he knows his job he gets the work of doing my picture.

By a little private system of research I've discovered that throughout the sad history of Australian films, the most money lost was lost by those sincere, spotless, blameless, honest as the day citizens who neither took a risk nor could have a finger of scorn or anything else pointed at them. Their records were so free from blemish that you could trust them with your wife, bankbook, or even your favourite girl friend, without a single qualm. They, unfortunately, were responsible for bigger financial losses in Australian film production history than anyone else. It's almost unbelievable, but nevertheless true.

Now, I'd know that my director would be a peculiar individual. I'd want him to be—he's more or less living in a dream. That's O.K. too, because nearly ninety per cent. of good pictures are only dreams converted to celluloid. Cash would be the least of his worries. After all, it is only one of the ingredients in the general scheme of picture production. You'll immediately say here, "Yeah, but you can't make pictures without it!!" Of course you can't, and you can't paint a beautiful canvas with a bag of gold. You can buy the paints and brushes, and if he's a true artist that's all he wants. How you get them is your worry, not his. His job is to make the picture. The worry of what this and that will cost doesn't concern him. If it did I'd start to worry. I'd imagine he was getting commercial, and it's very rare to mix commerce and art together successfully in the one individual.

Brahms, Schubert, Mendelssohn, Liszt, Handel, Rubens, Turner, Michael Angelo, Van Dyke, or any other of the great masters forgot that such a sordid thing as finance, commerce, or even such time wasters as eating and sleeping existed when they were engaged upon their great love of creating. To them

such incidentals could be cast aside until their work was complete. True, they occasionally dashed off a few pot boilers just to quieten those rowdy creditors, whose only interest in life was collecting money. I'm afraid that art is like that, even unto this very day. Disney, Bing Crosby, "Tracey," Chaplin, Laughton, and all the others, are not the ones concerned about the astronomatical fortunes their talents are building up. It's their agents and brokers who do this for them—they are too busily engaged in doing the work they love most. And that's why I'll engage a mighty good brand of accountants to see that my film maker isn't worried about anything but my picture—and he'll do me the job I want, I'd almost swear to it.

I'd also give him a "Yes man," and I'll explain just why.

Once I used to think that this "Yes man" individual was a sort of superstitious custom, but once again a little psychological research taught me that they really are most essential to a real director, because above everything else, the thing that does more to secure good work in pictures is encouragement. I suppose it's a form of ego. Nevertheless, a director, or anyone with the creative urge, must have encouragement. He loves to be told that his work is good. For is it not written in the greatest of all scenarios that the Lord looked at His work and saw that it was good? That, I think, shows that even in the beginning the Master wanted to know, to feel that what He had done was good. Pardon me if you think it blasphemy, but I like to imagine that the artist, be he making a film picture, or a painting on canvas, is a sort of tiny god—creating, beginning something, something that he wants to be good; something that will please and bring pleasure and enjoyment to others. He gains confidence if someone tells him his work is fine, splendid, or just plain good.

Now, in a busy studio, it's pretty near impossible for the "big shot" owner to keep rushing in and out every now and again just to peel off a few words of praise to his director, so to save time he employs a "Yes man," whose big job is to stand and at the opportune times murmur "great," "wonderful," "nice work," "better than your last, a certain hit." It may sound like hypocrisy, but it isn't, it's psychology—and it works!

In passing I'd like just to tell the story of the well known American producer, famed for his quaint and unorthodox sayings.

It appears that in his new picture the script called for an orchestra. The accounts department were called in to discuss prices. They considered that fifteen pounds a day per man was too much. The orchestra's agent became indignant. "Why, every man in this orchestra's a virtuoso," he exclaimed, dramatically.

The big producer raised his brows slightly. "I don't care a damn about their morals, all I'm interested in is, are they good musicians?"

Some time later a big biblical story was being readied for production. Walking past the casting department he happened to notice a dozen strange types standing about. "Who are these people, what part are they booked for?" he enquired.

The casting director gushed and hastened to explain that they were to be the twelve apostles.

"Twelve!!" shouted the big producer. "Twelve! What sort of picture do you reckon we're making, a quickie? Get busy and book another twenty. If you've gotta have apostles, have apostles, but don't stint it. This is a big picture."

And, he's the same producer who, after admiring his lady friend's beautiful hands, said he'd love to have a bust made of them.

I daresay these alleged stories are very similar to the stories that are circulated about the great Henry Ford during one period of his career. And what if they do cause a laugh against oneself. I'm sure our big producer and Henry Ford—and for that matter anyone else who can forget his own importance at times just to relax and take a damn good belly laugh at himself—does get a new angle on things. It makes you realise that after all you're not that important that if you faded out tomorrow the whole blessed industry would collapse—it won't.

In fact, they'd probably start saying things about you that you'll never hear while you inhabit this world. Particularly if you're one of those future Pioneers who plugged and plugged and plugged for the establishment of a film producing industry in Australia.

CHAPTER 19

Astrology

ASTROLOGY!! "Now what the dickens has astrology got to do with motion pictures?" I hear some reader ask. Actually I don't suppose there is much in common unless you believe in lucky "stars." Personally, I do. They're lucky to be called stars; lucky to ever have received the "break" in pictures. But outside of that, I don't associate astrology and movies, any more than I do Hitler's intuitions and Montgomery's strategy. My only reason for mentioning it at all is because, in last night's astrological forecasts for today, it said that today would have mixed aspects and I would experience several varied and unusual experiences. I did. Firstly, in popping into my publisher's office in the hope of a slight advance on the—ahem—epic, he glared threateningly over his highly polished desk, littered with numerous future best sellers—"Story? What story?—All you've written is a general tirade on what they shouldn't do, all the money that's been wasted, how inefficient everyone is, with one exception—and—now!—now!—you've got the hide——etc., etc."

I slunk away to a sheltered park bench and furtively waded through the duplicate copy of my MSS. Har, I thought, I believe I know what he meant—and no doubt up to a point he's fairly right. Of course, I've criticised, condemned, knocked, and generally been pretty pessimistic. I felt that Australian films deserved it all. That's why I've now decided to turn loose on a waiting horde of future scenarists, four story themes that I am sure, if correctly written and treated, would be sensational pictures. These suggestions are given absolutely free—gratis—and automatically go with the original price of the book; but more of this later. My next unusual experience (astrological) was the visit to the production headquarters of another Australian epic which, this day, is about to be born!!

This new offspring is, I estimate, to cost someone in the vicinity of five to six thousand pounds. For a few seconds I had hopes—could it be—was it the—? An hour or two later I feel that I should become a prophet. I am now about to prophesy: Verily I say unto this new venture, woe unto thee. Because not more than eight or nine months shall pass, and another "well, considering Australian pictures are only in their infancy, etc., etc.," and truly some singed "angel" shall curse and wail loud and long at such as he perceives upon a whitened sheet. For have I not written warning those who would still foolishly gamble recklessly upon something so alluring until such time as "she hits the screen"!

Today another Australian picture goes into production. A story?—even were it given to Hollywood's finest actors, plus Capra, La Carva, George Zukor, John Ford, or Alfred Hitchcock, they would stagger away with fear and trembling.

It is an Australian story of dirty slums, rich girl, ne'er do well lover, hopeless marriages, factory manager hero, divorces, fatal accident, growing children, repetition, denunciating, with the ultimate glorious "death on the battlefield redemption"—colossal!—collousy!! And for libel's sake, remember I haven't mentioned any names. Any reference to actual living incidents alive or DEAD is purely prophetic and educational—so watch out and see how far out I am.

I know this all seems cruel—it's meant to be. My dear old dad used to always say, just before he'd belt the hide off me for smoking his cigarettes, "this is going to hurt me more than it'll hurt you, but I've got to be cruel to be kind." And everyone reckons I take after my dad. Anyhow, what's another five or six thousand quid??

Now, after a few strong cups of coffee, I hear about Mr. Harry Watt (you'll recall my earlier prophecy—you know, the Overlanders film?). Well, he's just returned from a further trip north and tells the world that he's now selected a site for his headquarters; selected it because of its marvellous climatic and filmic conditions; selected it because never in his whole career did he even visualise that such terrific film material existed. The site selected is just a bit higher up than the place I suggested for the ideal cinema producing city of Australia. You will recall I mentioned the top of South Australia, up near the Central Australian border.

Mr. Watt selected Alice Springs, which is a few miles further north. Unable to resist the temptation, I immediately located his 'umble city office, made myself known to his very efficient secretary, who, after hearing who I was, stared in shocked surprise and said—"Oh—yes—who? Good gracious! You—

what do you want to see him about?" In return I grinned disarmingly and muttered, "I just wanna shake hands with him, that's all." Then, as if in a daze, she gurgled something into the inner-office 'phone and a few minutes later I shook hands and wished Mr. Harry Watt all the best and told him I had a lot of confidence in what he was about to do. Silly I know, but if you're a production enthusiast you get that way. (See how the astrology business is working out?)

Then I hies me off to a newsreel theatre just to see my favourite Donald Duck. Walt Disney is certainly a genius.

As you probably know—or should know—the nation is in desperate need of another hundred and sixty million pounds. The Jap is certainly an expensive Bug to exterminate—so, to bring home to every picture going Australian their patriotic duty, they have sponsored the production of several short films (?). The one I saw followed the Donald Duck. I wouldn't dare inflict the terrific "punchy" message this picture contained upon you, other than to give you the general theme of it.

Fade in—a large, well-fed looking man, dressed in working clothes, his face nicely smudged to represent toil stain; walks towards the camera. In the background we see the smoking chimneys of a big factory. On reaching the camera, he turns, and whom should he meet but a young, handsome "digger"—several nicely spoken well rehearsed lines of dialogue make it known to the audience that these two (the workman (?) and the "Diggah") are old friends.

"Ullo, Joe!"

"Ullo, Frank."

"'Ow's things?"

"Pretty good."

"Wadder yer know for Saterdee?"

"Nothin'!"

"I'm doin' better than I ever did, wot with overtime and big wages."

The Digger then changes his position, pauses as if to recall his lines, then assumes an injured expression. Dramatically—

"An' while you're at the races my cobbers are crawlin' through muddy (I'm almost certain he said muddy in preference to bloody.—This Digger, you will recall, was very refined)—muddy jungles—dying, riddled with bullets while you're at the races!"

Well after hearing this denouncement from his one time friend, our large worker dramatically moves, then with a resolute determination on his well-fed face, he crumples the racing paper in his strong hands.

By this time, the Diggah, after another disgusted stare at

his one time friend, turns and with a curt goo'bye moves out of picture.

The large workman then casts the racing guide from him and walks towards the bus, muttering something about lend for victory. Fade out.

There was a deep sigh from the audience seated around me. Several dozen people rose and left the theatre—I wondered if to race off and sink their life's savings into War Bonds? Then I settled back to see how America was doing in the March to Berlin and Tokio.

Maybe this astrology business has something, because, after viewing a very excellent two reel short on how America is salvaging scrap iron and turning plough shares into bullets, tearing down all their iron fences, I felt so imbued with the scrap iron saving necessity that I wanted to tear out to Centennial Park and rip off a few of the iron railings and forward them on to America for her drive for more iron. The Yanks certainly know how to produce propaganda "shorts"!!

Out in the open air again, and into our city's main street where they're holding a great drive for war loan funds. The over-amplified notes of a "tinny" piano was accompanying a popular baritone, who lustily yelled "On the road to Victory." This was followed by a startling announcement by a gentleman who had apparently sat up all the previous night working out figures. Sensationally he told the thousand or so lunch-hour listeners how much it cost to fire a torpedo, how much it cost per bomber plane. Then he casually mentioned the two or three millions required if you ever wish to purchase a war boat. The figures were phenomenal! "Yesterday," he said, raising his hand and eyes towards heaven, "we all saw dozens of aeroplanes flying over the city. Did we know how much they cost?" And as no one seemed to know he, after checking up with a sheet of paper, leaned closer to the microphone and, in a hoarse, dramatic whisper mentioned a figure almost treble that earned by "Gone with the Wind." The Police Band then played a stirring American march tune and another loan rally was over. Oh, I know you're saying "What the hell's all this got to do with Australian pictures?"

I'll tell you what it's got to do with Australian pictures. It's this. If the powers that be, or those that control the publicity side of money raising for the war effort, were to study the power of properly produced propaganda pictures and not just rely on antiquated ideas and early last war rally methods, they'd not only save time and money, but influence more subscribers to the various loans, etc. This ancient idea of having a paid publicity organiser standing on a platform yelling at a lot of people all about how much a battleship or an aeroplane

costs, has about as much effect on an audience as water on a duck's feathers.

"You've got to actually show 'em what the dough's wanted for. Not like the opus I previously mentioned—to wit the worker and the Diggah; not by showing a big gun or battleship or a 'plane with price tickets on them—but incorporate them all, or one at a time into a real, tingling, gripping film story. Show why they're needed, what would happen to you, you and yours if our fighting men don't get them. You've got to fire those twenty-five pounders right slap bang into some of those people who still reckon subscribing to the war effort is only another word for supplying next quarter's wages and salaries to all those people engaged in raising war loans. The properly produced motion picture can do it. Why, the expertly produced picture on war loan raising should, and could, make everyone who goes to a picture show subscribe—from the charwoman's humble bob a week to the governing director's thousands. Yes, dear reader, that's a stone cold certainty. A definite fact.

There's only one catch. First convince our war loan publicity experts (?) that the stuff they're littering up the movie screens with today under the guise of propaganda films, are not worth the power they use to flash 'em on the screen. Then, try and discover a film producer who knows his job. Tell him what's required and if he **really does** know his job, set him to work. But first you must find your film producer!!!

I don't know whether it's because I'm in a generous mood or if it's just because I am very anxious for everyone who purchases this book to say they've had their money's worth. But whatever it is—here goes:

Now, firstly I want to offer a few suggestions and ideas. Maybe they'll be of some use—at any rate I believe they're worth thinking about. For instance, we read almost daily the enormous importance of saving rubber and petrol. I know rubber is terribly scarce, and yet only the other day I saw what was supposed to be a sensational idea for raising money for a new loan. Personally I feel that if the Brain or Brains of the originator were money there wouldn't be enough to pay the deposit on a sixpenny war savings stamp.

Just listen to this—or I should say, read this. After another of those main street rallies, the mayor of each suburb, or shire, stepped or climbed aboard a heavy military truck upon which was affixed a small calico banner telling everyone to subscribe to the loan in the said mayor's district. Well, off they went. Roughly, I'd say there were forty trucks, forty mayors and forty drivers. Down this street, up the next, down the next, all over the city went this procession of mayors, and unless a mayor

is dressed up in all his mayoral splendour he doesn't look any different than you or I. Still, he's the mayor, and because of it he was driven hither and thither all over town. Just how much petrol was used I couldn't say. I do know though how far my old bus used to travel on a gallon! And big military trucks certainly can burn petrol! The tyres—well, forty trucks four tyres each; it took 160 good tyres to travel our mayoral tourists around the city, and the only patriotic remark I heard was from an old chap who looked as if he had intelligence. "Good heavens, and to think I travelled into town for a week in a tram so that I could save my gallon of petrol to take the wife and kids to the beach on Sunday." A lot of other people thought almost the same thing.

Now, the next point is that I personally think the subject matters in all these loan ads. are bad. For instance very few people like to buy sorrow. By that I mean no one, willingly, wants to contribute to suffering. Happiness, yes; but not to suffering or hardship. Now in most of these propaganda advertisements we see pictures of dead soldiers lying on battle-scarred beaches in the top right-hand corner is an illustration of this soldier when a baby. Today, he's dead—killed by a bullet. In another ad. we see a horrible Jap or German soldier whipping a poor civilian or stabbing a soldier with sword or bayonet. They're gruesome, horrible, nasty —psychologically your mother, my mother or anyone else's mother, shudders and wants nothing to do with it. To put her few shillings or pounds into a fund to continue it—whether we're stabbing the enemy or they're stabbing us doesn't matter —psychologically her reactions are against it. She loaths war and wants nothing to do with it or the things they use in it, even though her boy is over there fighting, killing, or being killed. Her one predominating thought is to have him home again. She wants the war to finish—victoriously, of course—but to finish. And way back in her heart, she, as a mother, doesn't reason that to subscribe to more and more deadlier weapons will bring him home quicker. No; she thinks that the more weapons he's got, the more fighting he'll have to do, and she doesn't want her boy to go on fighting, facing death and dying. She wants him home—and that's the way to make mums all over the country invest whatever she can in war loans. In most instances this goes for dad, too.

Don't stress death, killing, dying, sorrow, fear, torture, suffering. There's enough of that. Parents with their loved ones away have plenty of that without big advertisements featuring it and telling them there's more to come, unless, etc., etc.

Why not sell them happiness. The human race, and particularly the Aussie, will pay almost any price for happiness. Therefore, why can't we originate a drive on what real happiness a loan investment will bring. Those good old picnic days, car tours, holiday resorts, parties, the surf, fishing, and that little home, the garden, the football matches, test cricket, yachting—sell 'em all the attractive things, not the horrible ones. Feature what they're going to get for their investment; just what good old Aussie is really worth and how little they're asked to do to make it even better than the best days they've spent in it. Let 'em know what a bargain they're getting in return for those few pounds invested in something beautiful—or, in Australia! Tell and show 'em the benefits of great new industries started up because of the war, but feature the industries, not the terrible instruments of destruction they're manufacturing now, but the wonderful things they'll do and make when it's all over—and how they, simply by investing their money, can make all these things—their dreams—come true.

Mind you, this is only my idea; it may be wrong, but it's worth a try. Sell happiness and everyone will buy. Sell sorrow and nobody wants it as a gift.

Wandering again, says you—where's pictures come into it?

Simply that if you show all this happiness, all the beautiful things we're going to enjoy after the war—show them the greatest asset of all, their own Australia—and on the picture screens in every city, suburb, town and hamlet. Everyone who goes to the pictures will want to take a share in it.

Here's a funny idea. But after recalling all those rubber tyres and all that petrol just to give the mayors a ride and to display a small calico sign, it occurs to me that although I cannot vouch for its success perhaps some cinema projectionist or the "bloke wot operates the picture machine" could advise more fully upon it. But once again, why not try it?

Say, for instance, a movie projector was set up in or upon a high city building. Now, threaded through this machine is a film dealing with the various appeals—it could either be like the advertisement shown during the interval times at the theatres or as a news film. Then we patiently wait and watch for one of those nice nights when great big banks of white clouds fill the sky, or, if you're not so romantic or artistic, an overcast sky. Then switch on your powerful arc lamp, focus your picture onto the clouds, and way up there is your message. Thousands of people all over the city will rick their necks reading it. Silly, you say! Well, has anyone ever tried it? Once when I was a kid an old movie technician claimed—nay, swore

—that that was the way the "Angels of Mons" originated. In other words, utilise our clouds as a big movie screen.

Now don't worry—I've still got a million ideas left.

I've just had a very educational interlude. My son, aged 9 years, has just returned from the Saturday matinee. He is very excited; he tells me that the "Shadow" or the "Phantom" is a cinch to clean up the racketeers and the mysterious Rat that bumped off the "Dicks" and filled the other guys full of lead was planted by the Big Boss in the Speakeasy Dive so that when the Flatfeet see the skoit making a heavy date with the "Shadow's" henchmen, they organise a posse to save her from a lynching party. Then when the "Shadow" realises that the skoit is using the henchman for a fall guy he out with his shooting irons and drills him for being a dirty double crosser, and in the next episode, I'm informed, the "Flats" surround the "Shadow." But he steps on the gas and escapes again. But eventually he'll get the woiks and they'll "take him for a ride" and probably bump him off—which just makes ME realise what a great educator the Flicks really are. I must only pray that he is not too impressed when he sees "Where are your Children" or "The Sins of the Parents" coming next week.

CHAPTER 20

"A House is Built"

NOW, about these stories or themes I've previously spoken of. "The Darwin Road," or whatever you wish to call it! Really, when you think of it there's a wealth of marvellous picture material here. Just to see that this black, bitumen line, winding, twisting, turning over deserts, rocky gibber country, then through heavily wooded plains, past great prehistoric granite rocks, million year old ant hills, prospectors' graves, big artesian bores; a modern highway over a continent as old, if not older than Egypt.

A Roadmaker's camp, six or eight men, one an escaped convict, another an engineer, who because of a tragedy has lost his memory (amnesia) and takes a job as a labourer, a profiteering contractor supplying inferior material for the road. The discovery by the engineer, the sensational fight wherein the engineer regains his memory and yet tells no one until he finally exposes the fraud. Then the first dramatic dash from Darwin to the Alice Springs hospital over the new road by the military ambulance, carrying victims of the Jap bombing. Later the endless stream of convoys rushing supplies north. Adventure—scenery—action—drama—romance—on every inch of the great Darwin Road.

Just what a story you could write about it—it might even startle some big sponsor to make a film of it. So, go to it.

Next: Way out near the Western Australian border—or the "Granites" (marvellous scenery), an American Transport Plane is forced down. The young pilot, Jerry Tayler, is seriously injured whilst the rest of the crew, including the beautiful nurse (sex angle) plan that someone must attempt to make back to civilisation for assistance. Finally, Johnny Thomas, the co-pilot is selected for the trip. Franky Somebody-else, the radio operator, meanwhile decides that unless he can fix the radio (smashed on landing) there is a big possibility of them

all perishing, and so Johnny, guided only by a faulty compass, sets off for Laverton. Franky busies himself with the radio, Jerry Tayler becomes delirious, and whilst Mary, the beautiful nurse, is away searching for water, Jerry wanders off. Mary returns, realises what has happened, and sets out after him. A travelling tribe of natives, a lonely prospector, a rich find of gold near the Granites, an Australian search party, rescue! Jerry falls for station-owner's daughter home from war work in Darwin or Sydney. (Big international appeal because pretty nurse goes for station-owner's son just returned from New Guinea.)

Properly treated, written and produced, this is the type of story that would make a ton of money overseas as well as in Australia.

I've only written the stuff ad lib. The job's up to you, or you.

Oh, so you prefer a sea story. Good! What about this? Off the coast of South Australia there is an island called Kangaroo Island. Years and years ago it was the rendezvous of pirates. Bully Hayes is reputed to have buried much treasure in some of the great caves that abound along the coast. Now the main industry, apart from having very large families, is fishing and in many respects Kingscote, that's the main township, resembles a town on the Isle of Man.

There are approximately 500 people on this Island, and although only sixty by thirty miles in size, much of it remains still unexplored. The older residents are very religious and superstitious and believe strongly in the supernatural (a good point for present day film stories).

Way down on the far end of the Island is a beautiful, sheltered bay. (Incidentally, the scenery throughout the Island is perfect.) Now, if you stand on the cliff edge and gaze down into the clear deep water below you can plainly see the wrecks of several old ships (some say they are Spanish galleons). (Marvellous material.)

A lifeboat drifts towards the Island. It has followed the current in, and the four remaining survivors—two almost dead, two just able to realise that ahead of them is land at last after thirty-six days of drifting since their ship was sunk—scramble ashore, too weak to worry where they are and too far away from civilisation to attract attention. They crawl to a cave. Now I ask you if you or you or you can't build a great Australian interest story out of that? Well—perhaps you'd better stick to what you're already doing.

What, still more!!!

There's hundreds of 'em. But just in case your life's been

a bit too unexciting. Try and buy an Australian book called "A House is Built." It would make just about the finest Australian propaganda story I know.

It's a story based on several generations of Australians, starting from the day when Grandpa arrives from England and sets up his warehouse at Circular Quay, Sydney (in the days of Macquarie). It then traces the family's history right down to the present—a beautifully written yarn, one hundred per cent. Australian, and if produced properly, capable of earning a large fortune as a really super motion picture.

Remember—"A HOUSE IS BUILT."

So there you are—real Australian stories, offering scope for every type of writer, and only waiting to be turned into a genuine Australian picture.

And with this fond hope in mind, I say "LET'S MAKE A MOVIE."